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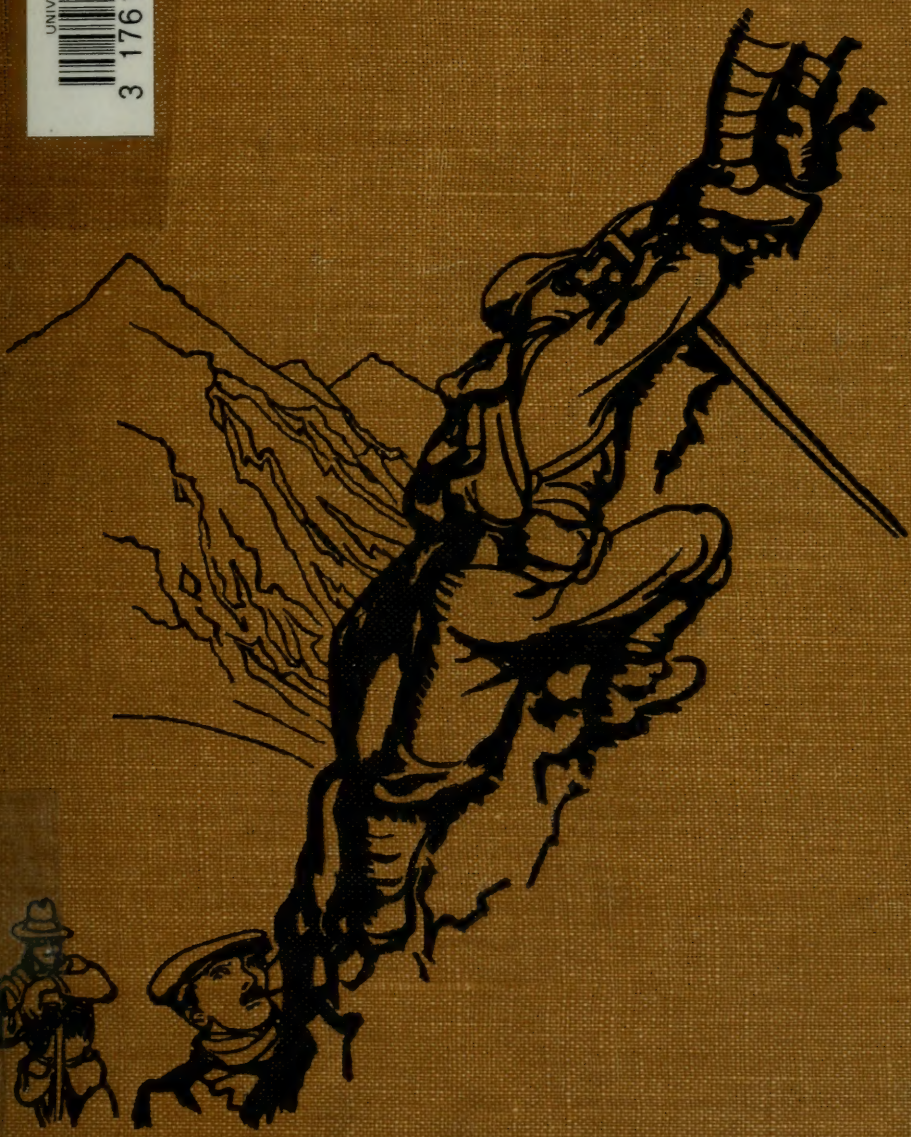
OUNTAINEERING VENTURES

CLAUDE E. BENSON



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MONT BLANC FROM THE AIGUILLE D'ARGENTIÈRE.

The Droites in the centre foreground, with the Courtes and a glimpse of the Grandes Jorasses to the left.
Behind are the Aiguille Verte, right; Mont Blanc, centre; and the Aiguille Noire de Péteret and the Aiguille du Géant, left.
(*Photo, B. R. Goodfellow.*)

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MOUNTAINEERING VENTURES

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BY
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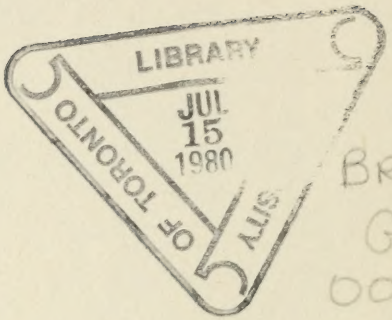

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS book of Mountaineering Ventures is written primarily not for the man of the peaks, but for the man of the level pavement. Certain technicalities and commonplaces of the sport have therefore been explained not once, but once and again as they occur in the various chapters. The intent is that any reader who may elect to cull the chapters as he lists may not find himself unpleasantly confronted with unfamiliar phraseology whereof there is no elucidation save through the exasperating medium of a glossary or a cross-reference.

It must be noted that the percentage of fatal accidents recorded in the following pages far exceeds the actual average in proportion to ascents made, which indeed can only be reckoned in many places of decimals. The explanation is that this volume treats not of regular routes, tariffed and catalogued, but of Ventures—an entirely different matter.

Were it within his powers, the compiler would wish adequately to express his thanks to the many kind friends who have assisted him with loans of books, photographs, good advice, and, more than all, by encouraging countenance. Failing this, he must resort to the miserably insufficient resource of cataloguing their names alphabetically. "Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks."

Messrs. Bentley Beetham, M. Botterill, Mrs. Florence Buckley, Messrs. J. F. Burton, H. R. C. Carr, R. S. T. Chorley,

F. M. Coventry, J. K. Crawford, Pierre Dalloz, S. B. Donkin, Captain J. P. Farrar, D.S.O., R. B. Goodfellow, Tom Gray, R. O. Griffith, W. P. Haskett-Smith, A. Holmes, Sir Seymour King, K.C.S.I., W. N. Ling, A. H. M. Lunn, M. A. Pallis, H. E. L. Porter, E. E. Roberts, H. E. Scott, F. S. Smythe, Sydney Spencer, G. A. Solly, L. R. Wager, Mrs. Harold Woolley, Mrs. James Woolley.

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MOUNTAINEERING VENTURES

INTRODUCTORY

IN the present year of grace, crossing the Atlantic to New York or the West Indies is an undertaking almost as commonplace as crossing the road at Hyde Park Corner, and not one-tenth part as dangerous; nevertheless it would be foolish and ungenerous on that account to disparage the enterprise and heroism of Lief, son of Eric the Red, who won his perilous way to the mouth of the Hudson, or of Columbus. In like manner the phrases "treadmill grind," or "fit only for novices"—frequently applied nowadays to the easier Chamonix routes to the summit of Mont Blanc—must not mislead us into underrating the courage and determination of the pioneers who made the first ascent.

As very few people who are not mountaineers have any conception of the bulk of a mountain, the following digression is not only pardonable but essential. To take a homely illustration! Snowdon is one of the best known of our British mountains, and has the advantage of standing in recognizable isolation. It is cut off from the Glyder range, which confronts it on the north-east, by the Pass of Llanberis, and a broad strath separates it from the Beddgelert hills on the south-west. Roughly speaking, the length of the group

on these sides is about eight miles, the breadth at the Nant Gwynnant end about six, and the south-west extremity a mile. Its height is of no great importance. Actually it runs from 1,000 to 3,500 feet. What is of importance is the acreage. Dropped down on London along the northern bank of the Thames, with its narrow extremity on Tower Hill, Snowdon would extinguish every being and every building to as far west as Hammersmith and as far north as Wembley, the line of destruction tailing away as it slanted eastward again.

Now the Mont Blanc range is about twice as broad as Snowdon, four times as long, and nearly four times as high. It is enormously higher over all, but, taking its base as Chamonix, it works out as just a trifle under four times. It is, in fact, a small, snow-clad county, lifted to great altitudes, rifted into deep valleys inwalled by tremendous precipices and ice-slopes, many of extreme steepness, armoured with fissured glaciers wherever ice can find creeping-ground.

Into this wilderness of peril on August 8, 1786, ventured two brave men, Jacques Balmat and Doctor Michel Gabriel Paccard, and won through—won through without all, or almost all, "the appliances and means" which experience estimates as essential in making the simplest expedition above the snow-line. They had no rope, no ice-axe, no compass, and, of course, no map, for the most excellent reason that there was not one in existence. There were sundry caricatures with dragons featuring as glaciers, etc., or glaciers featuring as dragons, but these were, just possibly, inadequate, possibly even misleading. Certainly they were not sufficiently comprehensive. Certainly they were also not dotted about with that very comfortable word "cabane," which adorns, at convenient intervals, the map in the pocket of the modern mountaineer. Also there was no Montanvert Hotel.

Quite apart from attendant perils, it was a fine feat of endurance. Attendant perils there were. There were naked glaciers with the crevasses visible, which ought not to be dangerous, but can be so to the inexpert. There were snow-covered glaciers, always dangerous to an unroped individual, and so unsafe for two that the authorities have decreed that whatever number is right on a rope, two is unquestionably wrong. There were ice-falls, which is the glacier equivalent of a waterfall, or, rather, cataract, the spurts of foam of which are represented by splinters of ice (*séracs*), some of them the size of a steeple, which detach themselves quite inconsequently and delete everything in the way of their descent. There were falling stones and other incidental dangers, of which more anon. Also, although the boots were probably adequate, the adventurers had no goggles to protect their eyes, and no veils, or no modern substitute, like lanoline, to save their skin. They might both quite easily have gone snow-blind, in which case the moving finger would have writ its last word about them. If we are to believe Balmat, Paccard actually did go blind, and Balmat himself half-blind. Also there is no doubt that their faces suffered terribly, although it is not necessary to accept absolutely Balmat's description of himself—that his eyes were red, his face black, his lips blue, and that every time he laughed or yawned the blood spurted from his lips and cheeks.

Possibly the best way of gauging the intrepidity of the exploit and the danger thereon attendant is that to-day no two mountaineering experts would essay Balmat and Paccard's route up Mont Blanc similarly equipped. If two were so lunatic as to do so and succeeded, it is not credit that would be their meed. If they came to grief, the pronouncement of the authorities would be that the expedition was thoroughly

discreditable, and that they had courted disaster. Seen in this perspective, the first ascent of Mont Blanc realizes more nearly its correct proportion.

That there was actual danger attendant on the venture is established by the accident on the " ancien passage " (a discovery by Jacques Balmat which enabled him to attain the summit), resulting in the death of three guides. The whole party, numbering eleven, started an avalanche, and were carried down the slope. Three of the guides were swept into a crevasse and lost. This happened in 1820. Portions of the remains of the victims were recovered at the foot of the glacier, 1861–65. Then, in 1870, came the terrible catastrophe in which an entire party, eleven in number, perished a short distance below the summit. This they had actually attained, but early in the descent were caught by a *tourmente* and wiped out, literally by inches, by cold and exhaustion. The diary of Mr. Bean, one of the victims, is most pathetic reading as it trembles away into silence. Happily such incidents are rare. If death must come to a man on a mountain, " sudden death " has no place in that man's Litany. He simply does not know what hurts him. This has been established in the case of individuals who have been rendered unconscious by relatively short falls. They have no recollection of the happening whatever.

The late Mr. C. E. Mathews, one of the Founders and Presidents of the Alpine Club, has epitomized the causes of this accident in a brief marginal note : " Climbing in bad weather. Bad guiding." This is true to the letter. Still, mountains make their own weather. The late Mr. Justice Wills rightly classified sudden storms amongst one of the unavoidable dangers of mountaineering. That unavoidable danger might have overtaken Balmat and Paccard, and the chances are they would not have survived.

Hiatus non valde deflendus—Balmat's interview with Alexandre Dumas and the controversy arising therefrom is only mentioned to be dismissed, with a caution to the curious that to look it up will be sheer waste of time, tempered with disgust. It is not, however, without reason that the fame of Balmat and Saussure is perpetuated in the fine statue at Chamonix, regrettable and even discreditable though it be that Paccard sleeps in an unmarked grave. "But such are human things." Napoleon lies in the stately mausoleum of Les Invalides, Ney in an obscure corner of the Père Lachaise.

The success of Balmat and Paccard was the culmination of several previous attempts, and by far stronger parties, some of which came within easily measurable distance of achievement. Both attempt and accomplishment were due, however, primarily not to the enterprise of the actors, but to the inspiration of Horace Benedict de Saussure. The conquest of Mont Blanc was with Saussure an obsession. He was an enthusiast of the first and best order. He accomplished a great deal of good sound work himself, and was genuinely eager to animate others to do better. He offered a reward to any one who would find a way to the summit; more, he undertook to pay "workman's time" even if the work were not completed—an unhallowed precedent. He must have had plenty of money then.* He needed it. His little caravan, when a year later he achieved his heart's desire, consisted, all told, of twenty persons. By some miracle they got up and down uninjured. Saussure was not only an enthusiast, he was a scientific mountaineer. In him we first discern the strategy of conquest which in embryo took shape in "shacks," and later developed into Refuges, Club Huts, and so on to Base Camps and Camp X.

* M. de Saussure lost the bulk of his money in the French Revolution.

Orestes and Ahrimanes are always at work. If Saussure's generosity was instrumental in the achievement of the conquest of the Great White Mountain, it is to be feared it was also a factor in the conversion of an honest home of simple peasantry into something unpleasantly like a den of thieves. In other words, it intruded itself into the thick heads of the manhood of Chamonix that in Mont Blanc they had, ready to their sturdy hands, a potential gold-mine. Balmat himself, possibly confusing metaphor and fact, lost his life many years later prospecting for gold on the cliffs of Fer à Cheval above Sixt. In any case, however, Mont Blanc is a very considerable handful, and very cross became the Chamoniards when this realization was driven home.

An honest labourer is worthy of his hire, of fair and even generous remuneration ; but it is not honest to insist that a platoon is necessary to do the work of a couple of files, that such platoon should be paid for so doing, and that, in addition to being provisioned for something like double the length of the expedition, they should take enough liquor with them to keep them happy all the time. It is to be feared that the whole community, guides and caterers, were in the swindle as occasion offered. It took shape which would elicit the envious admiration of a street-corner trade-union orator. It bullied the guides, it bullied the tourists. The tourist was condemned to Hobson's choice : he had to take the first guides on the roster, whether he liked or no. Similarly, the guides were allotted without their inclination for either tourist or expedition being considered.

Such conditions were intolerable, and the Chamoniards received a nasty shock when Mr. E. S. Kennedy, together with Hudson, Grenville and Christopher Smyth, and Charles Ainslie, made the ascent of the mountain, guideless, from

St. Gervais. Worse was to follow. The insolent English not only essayed the mountain from the Courmayeur side, but had the hardihood to reach the summit.

It is natural to suppose that these daring and hardy Englishmen, whose attempts and successes were in the spirit of the best traditions of British enterprise, would have enlisted the cordial recognition and esteem of their countrymen. It was not so. For some reason inconceivable, the sport of mountaineering was discredited from the first, and has not yet entirely shaken off the shackles fettered on it by what may be charitably called ignorance—ignorance, it is to be feared, largely impregnated with jealousy. The mountaineer was a fool until it dawned on the intelligence of the Assize of Primrose Hill that the term fool was scarcely applicable to such men as John Tyndall and Leslie Stephen ; so the stigma was modified to foolhardy. It was foolhardy, then, to attempt a snow-mountain with guides ; guideless climbing was criminal folly. This remarkable perversity persists even to this day. If a man takes a toss in the hunting-field and breaks his neck, or gets spilt out of a small sailing-boat and drowned, he goes to his grave assoilzied by public opinion. Not so the mountaineer. He " had no business to be there," or " was risking the life God had given him." He had just the same business there as the man on the steed or in the boat, and that business was to enjoy himself healthily. The risk to the life God has given one of riding straight to hounds, small-boat sailing in anything like weather, and serious mountaineering is just about the same.

An anecdote which is interesting as illustrating the outlook of the man in the street on the mountaineering ideal has recently been published in connection with the great Duke of Wellington. Some young mountaineers had recently accom-

plished the then somewhat unusual exploit of ascending Mont Blanc, and, on being asked by the great Duke what they had seen from the top—a question which "pierced to the joint and marrow"—they were "obliged to confess" that they had seen nothing but mist and so forth. The view from the summit is a glorious and delightful complement to a climb, but it is not its object. Was the eager competition to ascend the Matterhorn, was Winthrop Young's daring and masterly storming of the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon for the sake of the view from the summit? Were these great efforts even

> "To taste the joy of living, as you taste it only there,
> In the higher, purer air"?

Nay. The ultimate object is loftier—witness Mallory's and Irvine's dash for the summit of Everest. It is

> "the intimate joy of existence—
> Labour accomplished and victory won."

To return to Chamonix and to revert for a moment to the illustration of Snowdon. Snowdon rises in long, gradual slopes from the north-west and west, and falls abruptly to the east and south. Mont Blanc rises gradually from Chamonix and falls abruptly in the direction of Courmayeur. Whether the Chamonix guides were capable of undertaking such expeditions does not enter. That kind of thing had to be stopped. It was forthwith decreed that no ascent of Mont Blanc was genuine except from Chamonix, conducted by Chamonix guides at Chamonix prices, and avouched by a certificate from the Chamonix Bureau. This is rather amusing when one considers that one of the finest, if not the most difficult, routes from the Courmayeur side was pioneered by Mr. T. S. Kennedy

of Leeds. A Scotsman from Leeds is exactly the man one would think of trying to bluff.

The amateurs who took part in these expeditions were brave men. The guides were assuredly heroes—that is, if they had the courage to descend via Chamonix. The village was likely to prove more dangerous to them than the mountain. Whymper records an occasion on which, owing to the impertinence of himself and Kennedy in making a new ascent with "outland" guides only, trouble arose at Chamonix, which was only quelled by the intervention of gendarmes.

It was magnificent, but it was not effective. In spite of shouting and demonstration, it became established that there were guides outside Chamonix every whit as capable as the native born, and, what was at least as galling, amateurs who could climb without guides at all. This was a revelation which indeed touched the whole "guide" community, but only slightly. Guideless climbers even to-day are not in the majority, and also even these have acquired their snow-craft in the company of professionals.

With the realization of the exploits indicated, enterprise followed hard on enterprise. Inaccessible peaks fell, not like castles of sand, for many put up a most stubborn fight—the Matterhorn, for instance, only yielded to Whymper's eighth assault, the Aiguille du Dru to Dent's nineteenth, but, relatively, in rapid succession. Nevertheless they were vanquished, and, once beaten, like many a champion of the modern ring, they never came back, though it is true that more than one of the giants had, like Samson, to be shackled into submission. Here be a few examples. In 1864 fell the Mont Dolent and the Aiguilles de Trélatête and d'Argentière; in 1865 the Grandes Jorasses, the Aiguille Verte, and de Bionassay followed suit. In this year, too, was accomplished the very difficult

Brenva route, familiar—at least by name—through Mason's fine romance, *Running Water*. Then followed Kennedy's ascent, 1872; the Brouillard route, 1877; the conquest of the Aiguilles which still held out: the Dru, 1878; the Charmoz and Grépon, 1880; the Géant, 1882; and the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret, 1885.

Like work had been going on elsewhere, and the upshot was that towards the end of the last century enterprising members of the Alpine Club found themselves like a company of stranded Alexanders, seeking new worlds—within reasonable distance, *bien entendu*—to conquer, and finding none. The only remedy was, in the words of a distinguished member of that august body, "to do the right thing the wrong way." It would seem that this glorious (or unhallowed) inspiration was born and nurtured amongst the crags of the homeland. Anyhow, it has attained vigorous manhood. Thus, between 1786 and the present day the philosophy of mountaineering has developed through the following gradations: whether it is possible to attain a given summit at all; whether it is possible so to attain by a reasonably practical route, with a respectable margin of safety; and so to the full-blooded proposition of the reaching of such summit by "bypaths and indirect, crook'd ways," with a bare margin.

THE PÉTERET RIDGE, MONT BLANC.
(*Photo, F. S. Smythe.*)

THE CAUCASUS

ONCE upon a time—and that quite recently—a visitor in a remote village called by invitation on the parson, to find the parson away. The reason for this apparent discourtesy was as follows. The son of one of the parishioners was in an infirmary some five-and-twenty miles distant, doing well after a minor operation—adenoids, in fact. There was no cause for anxiety, but the mother took it into her head to be anxious —very anxious. Wherefore the good parson jettisoned his engagements and motored fifty miles to assure the good woman on his word as a clergyman that the boy was really as well as the doctor said he was.

Parvis componere magna, as elsewhere. In the year 1889 a party of English climbers, with guides, went on a journey of as many hundred miles to bring such comfort as might be to the hearts of those whom they knew, and who knew themselves, to be bereaved of some who were dear to them. Late in the previous season (1888), far away in the savage wilds of the Caucasus, one Rieger, dragoman and interpreter to W. F. Donkin and H. Fox of the Alpine Club, had come down from the desolation of the mountains to the life of the valleys with the report that nothing had been seen of his employers or their guides, Kaspar Streich and Johann Fischer, for three weeks.

Such English as were in the neighbourhood realized that this report was sentence of death on the missing. Neither

were they in any doubt as to the manner thereof—the act of God somewhere high up amongst the peaks and glaciers. The Russians, on their part, were in no doubt as to the fate of the party—death by the act of man; and they left the inhabitants of the neighbourhood in no doubt as to their suspicions. The attitude was characteristic—*i.e.* insolent and tyrannical—and might have been inconvenient, even dangerous, to the English, had they not whole-heartedly discredited the suggestion and said so out loud. Unfortunately it was too late in the season for a thoroughly organized search-party to operate. Had it been otherwise, the story of the venture of 1889 would quite probably never have been written. Mr. Phillips Wolley—noted for his prowess with sticks, gloves, and as a big-game shot—was on the spot, and not only searched unremittingly himself, but put his wide knowledge at the service of others. It was too late. Autumn closed in, and further effort was impossible. Mr. Wolley, on his return to England, told the writer that he personally was convinced that the party had been swept away by an avalanche. He also had some very hard things to say about the Russian officials.

Nevertheless, to be fair, there was, *prima facie*, one good excuse for their suspicion. They were entirely unacquainted with the principles of skilled mountaineering. That four men should tie themselves together with one rope for the purpose of ascending a peak was to them unthinkable. Therefore that four men should disappear simultaneously without the agency of foul play was also unthinkable.

Still there remained a glimmer of uncertainty. It was not established that the party had perished to a man in one fell swoop. One, perhaps more than one, might have escaped with life from the disaster and be lying crippled in some wretched

hut, amongst folk whose language was unknown, cut off from the outer world. Again, if all had perished, what was the manner of their death? Philosophically, if a man is dead he is dead, and there's an end of him. The manner of his death matters not one straw, provided he did not suffer, in which case the less known the better. Affection and friendship will have none of such philosophy. Also in mountaineering circles there was a natural desire to ascertain the nature of the catastrophe it was certain had befallen. Thus it came about that in 1889 a remarkable search-party set out from England. It included Clinton Dent (who had been with Fox and Donkin, but had been compelled to give up owing to sickness), Douglas Freshfield, Hermann Woolley, with Captain C. H. Powell of the Indian Army, and the guides K. Maurer, A. Fischer, and C. Jossi. A worthy party, animated by motives not less worthy—pity, generosity, or affection, each dominant in this or that individual, but shared in a sense by all.

What exactly accommodation is in the Caucasus to-day it would be suicidal, without special safeguards, to seek to ascertain. In those days it was—primitive. No such considerations, however, as distance, time, hardship, or discomfort were likely to deter Dent and his party. What they had set out to accomplish, that they would do if it lay within their powers.

In this spirit they set out. In something akin to this spirit they were received. Official help was ungrudgingly accorded them. Unfortunately it was help of the red-herring brand. A native had been found with a wound that might have been inflicted by an ice-axe. Therefore that wound had been inflicted by an ice-axe. *There* was the clue of the direction taken, the nature of the disaster, the very spot where or whereabouts it had occurred. Again, some footprints had been

traced leading to a tolerably rational route over a pass, the summit of which was cairned. The cairns had assuredly been placed there by the English. The pass led over into Suanetia or thereabouts. Therefore the English were being held to ransom by some tribe over yonder or elsewhere, always supposing they had not been robbed and made away with.

Again, the Russians must be acquitted of blame. An attempt to ascend such a mountain as Koshtantau was quite outside their reckoning. In fact, up to that time it had not been climbed, and the first ascent, made a little later by Mr. Woolley, was not by the route selected by Donkin and Fox. That was exceedingly difficult, and certainly impracticable on the occasion of their essay.

Once more *parvis componere magna*. The frequent comparison in this little volume of great mountains with our humble hills may lead to a false analogy, and so to false conclusions. It may be within the memory of man that parties numbering scores have scoured our Snowdon in vain search after the missing for over two days. How futile, then, to seek for a lost party on the mighty flanks of Koshtantau. Quite! The distinction is that in the case of almost any British hills, excepting the Coolin, Teallachs, *et hoc genus*, one may start from almost any given point and walk, scramble, or climb to the summit without a divergence of more than a score of yards to one side or the other. Now, inasmuch as Snowdon (*vide* Introduction), if dropped down on London, would extinguish it from the Tower Bridge to West Kensington and so to Wembley, this connotes an enormous amount of ground to be covered. On the great snow mountains the channels of access are restricted in number. Also, once committed to a given line of ascent, to it you are committed, to be on reaching the sky-line again in like manner com-

mitted. Nevertheless there is plenty of room for mistake in selecting the start of the attack, and even of occasional divergence on the way up. A false start on Koshtantau would mean the waste of anything between two days and a week as the least serious penalty. Happily the searchers had guidance more relative than will-o'-the-wisp local conjecture—to wit, Mr. Fox's diary. From it they were able to reason out, with approximate accuracy, the scheme of campaign which had terminated so disastrously. Approximately only. The guides would have chosen another route. It is remarkable, even perhaps providential, that the party was able to follow so exactly in the traces of the missing men.

It was no primrose path. The mountaineering was of high order—that is to say, justifiable only for experts. They forced their way up icy couloirs, and swung away towards the great peak without finding track or sign, till all at once Maurer, the leading guide, came to a halt with the exclamation, " Great God ! The sleeping-place."

It was even so. On a snow-clad eyrie, sheltered above by overhanging crags, beetling over a sheer drop of a thousand feet or more, was the last resting-place in this life of the lost party, just as they had left it that bright morning a year agone in joyous anticipation of conquest. Through the snow protruded portions of the sleeping-bags. Full they were, but only with the accumulations of winter, to the relief of the searchers. For one brief moment had come the fear lest their friends had perished of exhaustion. Close at hand were rucksacks, a stewpan half full of water with a metal cup floating in it, a revolver. Further examination disclosed sundry delicate instruments done up in a sock and a glove. All was just as it had been left. There was really no need to pursue the quest. Donkin, Fox, and the guides had set out for Koshtantau, and

had not returned. That was all. Nevertheless the searchers persevered in the hope of finding some definite sign. There was none. Nevertheless they could trace reasonably how far the party had gone. How much farther was less than conjecture. Somewhere beyond their ken something had happened. A slip on the ice, a slip of the snow—who knows? A quick, clean death in any case—such a death as a mountaineer would choose.

It was done! The expedition had accomplished its task. The mourners at home knew the worst and the best. The peasants were cleared of the obloquy of an unworthy suspicion. The searchers had done all they could, and no men could have done more.

Not very many days previously Donkin and Fox, with their guides, had essayed the South Peak of Ushba, and failed—honourably indeed, but had failed as did many others.

Ushba is a terrific mountain. Mr. Cockin records that, next to the Matterhorn, it was the most imposing mountain he had seen. Reading between the lines, it is questionable, whether he did not consider it at least as imposing. The great South Peak does, as he points out, certainly suggest the Matterhorn. If less shapely, it is bulkier. Also it is loftier from base to summit by some 2,000 feet, and its precipices are to scale. The difference in elevation above sea-level is not so great, the Matterhorn being 14,771, the South Peak of Ushba 15,413 feet.

At length, on July 19, 1903, H. von Ficker, with his sister, W. R. Rickmers, A. Schulze, with one Muratbi as porter and dragoman, made a most determined attempt on the peak, which in fact, although immediately unsuccessful, sealed its fate.

They had spent some time in reconnoitring, and had not spent it in vain. They noted on the ridge between the moun-

tains of Maseri and Ushba, somewhat nearer the latter, two thin towers. Beyond this they discovered a deep chimney, or couloir, running up to a notch close under the face of Ushba itself. They were confident that if they could reach this notch they could make a way to the Lower Field, the wide snow-slope which lies below the great wall of the South Face of Ushba. They were, however, by no means so confident of reaching the notch, and with good reason. The top of the chimney was capped by an ice-cornice from the glacier above, and to reach its foot a slope, fissured by deep, avalanche-scored gullies, had to be crossed. As a pleasing continuation from the lower chimney to the notch was a thinner fissure. Moreover, the rocks were, in mountaineering phrase, A.P.—Absolutely Perpendicular, or as near vertical as no matter. At this point it was that Cockin had turned back, as had Rickmers and Hacker in 1892. Somewhere, also, hereabouts Donkin and Fox had given up the climb. They had avoided the slope and attacked by the rocks, but details are wanting owing to the catastrophe on Koshtantau. So formidable was the couloir in appearance that von Ficker's party decided to do likewise, and tackled the South Buttress. They did not climb far. "Never," writes von Ficker, "have I struck such dangerous rock." They returned, and after consultation decided on the couloir as the preferable line of assault. Verily, it seems to have been a choice between the devil and the deep sea, for if the rocks were dangerous the couloir was constantly stone-swept. Still, it was shorter. Accordingly, at 3.45 the next morning they set off, Fraulein von Ficker, Muratbi and all.

The tracks and steps of the previous day made the going relatively easy, and the earliness of the hour reduced the risk from falling stones to a minimum. Still, it was not till 8.15 that they reached the upper crack. Here the leader, well

held by Schulze, tackled the cornice and hacked his way through. The situation attained seems to have been sensational; to quote the narrative, "it seemed that anything falling would encounter no obstacle." This is a taking phrase, worth memorizing. "Across sunlit space" the two or three thousand feet of summit cliff "towered gloomily." Von Ficker held on till he reached a short lateral ridge running down from the main South Buttress, till it lost itself in the Lower Field. Then he went back to his companions and, joining forces, they climbed down from the notch until they stood dead above the lower end of the Field.

It was not a place where they could afford to linger. Icicles were already rattling down from the sunlit summit far overhead. Accordingly they struck up along the face bounding the western edge of the Field by a diagonal series of pitches. At first the work was quite easy, but gradually the difficulties increased. The scale of the rocks was gigantic, "the mightiest precipices I have ever encountered." At length, at 12.15, a halt was called. "It was not a good place," but presumably the best available. Moreover, there was water at hand, discovered by Muratbi. Fraulein von Ficker settled herself in the position of cook. Ice was cleared off the rocks, a balustrade of pitons and line set up, and all was ready for the bivouac. Meanwhile Schulze, presumably by way of keeping himself warm, had climbed the last pinnacles of the ridge until he reached a gendarme, which was christened The Falcon from its appearance. After which they cuddled down, secured themselves with rope, covered themselves as warmly as they could, and made themselves generally comfortable for the night at a height of something over 12,000 feet above sea-level. They did not make themselves comfortable. No one really slept, not even Muratbi, who had clad himself in his

burka, an article of clothing calculated to keep one warm almost anywhere and to bite anybody who comes near it anywhere. At last, just when von Ficker was getting a hard-earned doze, his sister roused him up with the announcement that tea was ready—in other words, that it was time to be up and doing.

First breakfast over, they put on their "claws" and struck up towards the south-east ridge of the mountain by the ice. Step-cutting was essential, and the position of the leader was one to be envied. He at any rate had an opportunity of getting warm. After an hour's very hard work they reached a short ridge of old snow from which a vast abyss drops to the south-east.

At this point Schulze took the lead with von Ficker as second. It was seemingly no place for experiments by a large party, and the others were to wait whilst the leaders hunted for a possible route. They hunted for three hours in vain. The rocks went well enough to start with, but higher up go they would not, although "it was a comparatively short distance to the safety of our balustrade." This last suggests an unusual outlook on the possibilities of coming off.

Like Wellington at Orthez, with defeat staring them in the face, they changed instantaneously and fearlessly their plan of campaign, and made for the south-western extremity of the precipice.

This move entailed crossing the Lower Field at its widest, an arduous and, towards the end, really hazardous traverse owing to the presence of ice-blocks, insecurely poised. This led to the Red Corner. Redness of rock almost invariably connotes rottenness. Very generally it is attributable to the presence of iron. Strange it is that iron, the eternal symbol of strength and durability, should be to the mountaineer the red

light of danger. Where there is iron there is weakness—in rock. To a slight intrusion of iron, no thicker than the edge of a sheet of cardboard into a seemingly sound hold, was due quite recently the death of one of our most accomplished rock-climbers.

Before turning the corner they stopped for a noonday halt, and then von Ficker unroped and went round the corner to reconnoitre. The prospect was not encouraging ; it was even, to quote von Ficker's own expression, " disconcerting "—a snow slope leading up to a precipice, terminating in a perfectly smooth, vertical face. If this would go, victory was assured. Admitting that there is much virtue in If, there is a perfectly damnable amount of disappointment. It would not go. At half-past two they had to give up, all out, or, in the language of the narrative, " though in excellent form, fatigue prevailed."

Von Ficker was for retreat, but Schulze was eager for one last try, and, as another night out was inevitable, his companion consented. The rocks by this time were in execrable condition, streaming with ice-cold water from the melting snow on the sun-bathed summit. Schulze, however, was a man of iron with a heart as big as his rucksack, and withal a rock-climber of the first order. By-and-by from the unseen—*i.e.* round a corner—came his cheery shout, " It goes all right." Followed a confabulation, at the end of which it was resolved that the others should be asked to come up, and that, if possible, Rickmers should tie on with them. This was duly accomplished—in something over an hour. Then the three set out for the summit.

The climbing from this point was both difficult and dangerous. The belays were smooth and far between, and everywhere the icy water was by then flowing literally in streams. But for these factors it is possible, even probable, that Ushba

would have yielded that day to the attack. Another handicap was the lateness of the hour. Had they deferred the final assault till another day, they could have made straight for the correct route and, if they had found the rocks too bad, would have had plenty of time to secure themselves by the skilful use of pitons. Quite ! but the only obstacle between them and the ridge which meant the end of their difficulties was a smooth, hollowed slab, some 8 or 10 feet high. Schulze tried desperately, but could not manage it. Von Ficker backed him up for all he was worth, which was not very much—the situation was far too precarious to allow of effective help.

Failing in his attempt, Schulze traversed out to the right in the hope of turning the impasse, whilst von Ficker scrambled a little higher and managed to hitch the rope after a fashion over a smooth belay.

Then something happened. Exactly what is uncertain, except that the belay proved useless and that Schulze fell the full length of the rope, some 40 feet, and was knocked unconscious. How it came about von Ficker was not pulled out, for the jerk came full on him—long afterwards he wrote that he could not understand how it was that he was not cut in half—is extraordinary. Had he gone, Rickmers must have been dragged from his holds—and so the end.

What happened thereafter is best told in von Ficker's own words :

" I will not attempt to describe what followed. I might misrepresent facts. I will only say this. The transport of our unconscious companion over those precipices was indeed the most difficult and dangerous task I ever tackled on any mountain. Our longest rope hung over that difficult place ; the second was already cut through, and a 35-metre cord had

to serve over wet rocks. My right hand was injured and pained me. At the most difficult places I was at the end of my strength. On the last rocks Rickmers had to move the victim by himself. I let myself down direct from an overhang on to Muratbi's shoulders. He and my sister were greatly alarmed by the cries they had heard coming from above.

"Under the summit cliff Schulze came round sufficiently to be able to proceed. It was eight o'clock. . . .

"We had been defeated by an unlucky accident, yet we were lucky not to be on the glacier 1,800 metres lower down. Luck followed our further descent. In almost complete darkness and thick fog we passed 'Red Corner,' and did the long diagonal traverse. There was almost continuous lightning. It was an ungodly return. At length we could tackle the last snow slope to the bivouac.

"It was after nine o'clock that we reached the place we had left seventeen hours previously. Schulze and I got straight into our blankets."

Now comes the most amazing episode of the story. The accident happened on the 21st July. One would have thought that such an experience would have satisfied most mountaineers, especially Schulze, and more especially in the matter of Ushba, for quite a long time. Not a bit of it. On 26th July the first ascent of the South Peak of Ushba was made by R. Helbing, F. Reichert, O. Schuster, A. Weber—and A. Schulze.

Schulze did not go as "a passenger" either. In fact, he led the finish. Again extracts are permissible: The summit rocks were attacked at 11.10, and three hours later the scene of the mishap was reached. "Imagine," writes Schulze, "my feelings!" This is a heavy demand. Imagination is already staggered at his amazing pluck and resolution. After prospecting for a while he came to the conclusion that the smooth

face was impracticable, and that the true route was to the left. To the left he went thus: "Unwillingly I leave the comparative safety of the gully, and climb the forbidding wall. I know of few places more awe-inspiring. . . . I traverse about three metres. It won't go, but three metres lower is a small knob from which I can advance. With great effort I succeed in driving in a piton, and rope on to it. Climbing up to the left, I reach a great overhang. If I can traverse back to the upper end of the flake, success is ours. It spurs me to full effort. To make doubly secure I drive in a second piton. At last I succeed, gasping with the effort. The place stands out as the most difficult and dangerous I have ever seen." As a matter of fact this pitch of 25 feet occupied two hours of the time taken in climbing the last wall. That time was six hours. "The others," writes Schulze kindly, "came over the face direct." Probably very much after the manner beginners come over the Nose on the Pillar Rock. Soon afterwards they reached the summit, seventeen hours from the start. The descent was accompanied by fireworks of the most unpleasant kind. The ice-axes hissed and sparkled. Every point of rock was alive with blue flame, and the rope itself was a line of fire. They had to bivouac as they could, and spent a "teeth-chattering night." The next morning all these little inconveniences were forgotten in the joy of victory. These Germans had conquered, guideless, a summit which had defied over twenty assaults, some by very strong parties of professionals and amateurs.

To emphasize the domination of man, on 10th August L. Distel, G. Leuchs, and H. Pfann—the mountaineer who ran Dr. Karl Blodig so close for Pic Luigi Amadeo in their peak-bagging race (see the Brouillard Ridge)—traversed the mountain from north to south. They camped high up on the

Ushba Glacier, but the going was so bad that they had to sleep out under the North Peak. In fact, the work was far more difficult throughout than they had anticipated, not only owing to the unchanging obstacles—*e.g.* rocks, ice-slopes, and so forth—but to the state of the snow, which was in a dangerous, powdery condition. The simple-looking saddle between the peaks took a full four hours. Further, they were delayed by Leuchs being upset by stomach trouble. Later on that unfortunate man, whilst taking out his field-glasses to look out for the other party, who were elsewhere, dropped his rucksack, and away went most of their slender stock of provisions. Whereafter they contrived to subsist on some tinned stuff, and on his ration from this, and a bit of chocolate, Leuchs carried on for seventy-three hours. Nevertheless they triumphed. In fact, they created two records. (1) The first traverse of Ushba, which was intentional. (2) Four nights out in the open, high up in the glacier regions, which was assuredly not according to plan.

USHBA, THE SOUTH PEAK.

(*Photo, Hermann Woolley. By permission of the Executors.*)

THE MATTERHORN

"THE monster was far away when we first saw him, but there was no such thing as mistaking him. He has the rare peculiarity of standing by himself. He is peculiarly steep, too, and is also most oddly shaped. He towers into the sky like a colossal wedge, with the upper third of its blade bent a little to the left. The broad base of this monster wedge is planted upon a grand glacier-paved Alpine platform, whose elevation is 10,000 feet above sea-level; as the wedge itself is some 5,000 feet high, it follows that its apex is about 15,000 feet above sea-level. So the whole bulk of this stately piece of rock, this sky-cleaving monolith, is above the line of eternal snow. Yet while all its giant neighbours have the look of being built of solid snow, from their waists up, the Matterhorn stands black and naked and forbidding all the year round, or merely powdered or streaked with white in places, for its sides are so steep that the snow cannot stay there. Its strange form, its august isolation, and its majestic unkinship with its own kind make it, so to speak, the Napoleon of the mountain world. 'Grand, gloomy, and peculiar,' is a phrase which fits it as aptly as it fitted the great captain."

This fragment is valuable. It is interesting and instructive. It is probable that no mountain has exercised so great a fascination on mountaineers, has so captivated the popular imagination, as the Matterhorn. "Stronger minds," wrote Whymper,

referring to local superstitions, "felt the influence of the wonderful form, and men who ordinarily spoke or wrote like rational beings, when they came under its power seemed to quit their senses, and ranted, and rhapsodized, losing for a time all common forms of speech." "Every time the Matterhorn appears upon the landscape it is wise for the writer to cease his description and to refer the reader to—the Matterhorn. If the reader has ever seen it, even once, he will not have forgotten it; while for him who has not seen it, no words can describe the magnificence of the rock which rises perpendicularly towards the sky for 9,000 feet from the bottom of the valley, an ever-changing apparition which fascinates and threatens by turns." Thus Guido Rey in his monumental work. Careful reading will detect that even he has not entirely 'scaped the infection. Most writers are far less happy. On encountering the Matterhorn they seem to feel themselves bound to describe it, which is unfortunate, and succeed in getting these descriptions into print, which is more unfortunate still. They strive to convey their own impressions, till the mountain is distorted and obscured with a mist of words; they pile upon the Ossa of exuberant adjectives the Pelion of laboured phraseology intended to impress the reader, till the Titan is in danger of becoming painfully flat under the incubus of a heap of rubbish designed to extol him.

It is such effusions as these which make the opening passage of this chapter of special value. It is a gem, ill-cut truly, and ill-polished and full of flaws, but a gem nevertheless. It gives light in the place of obscurity. It is not the work of a mountaineer, nor of a descriptive writer, but of a professional humorist who was gifted with a rare capacity for expressing the popular mind in a popular manner. Unhappily "popular" derivatively is almost synonymous with "vulgar." This

defect can be detected in the passage quoted, and is so evident in the succeeding paragraph that this is better left unquoted.

The special interest of the selection is that it indicates the subjective causes which made the conquest of the Matterhorn an enterprise of such time and difficulty. The mountain has been described as unique time and again by various writers, but its most singular characteristic has been overlooked. It is the one and only mountain, not only in the Alps, but elsewhere, which has succeeded in outfacing by sheer effrontery, and that for many seasons, climbers of the first order—men who were capable of, given decent conditions, taking it in their stride: Vaughan Hawkins, the Parkers, Tyndall, T. S. Kennedy, R. J. S. Macdonald, Gorret (the Abbé) and Whymper, amateurs; the Carrels, Gab. Maquignaz, Bennen, Croz, and Christian Almer from amongst the guides.

This imposture was due to the peculiar steepness, accentuated by the wedge-like shape with the upper third of the blade bent, indicated in the introductory sentences. By the face which comes first into view on the ordinary route of approach, the Matterhorn certainly appears inaccessible. There is nothing remarkable in this illusion. It can be observed on our English hills time and again. Coming up, for example, from Bettws-y-Coed to the meek, mild, and grassy Moel Siabod, one is confronted on a certain aspect by an array of nearly vertical grass gullies—up which, on closer acquaintance, one could take a perambulator. The bent wedge-shape can be seen away on the left any day by walking southward from Pont Aberglasllyn. It is the end of a projecting ridge, and looks as steep as a church spire, but is a walk. Projected on a scale of thousands instead of hundreds of feet, its appearance would be awesome indeed. Moreover, when first sighted in full from the Zermatt side, the Matterhorn is, so to speak, right on the

top of one. Still it does seem strange that these men, accustomed to great elevations, should have been so, and so long, deceived. Also, as an adjunct to its strategic iniquities, the Matterhorn had provided on the Italian front a gigantic natural rock staircase, to the eye relatively easy of ascent, which even to-day, be-chained and be-laddered, is more difficult than the original route was when virgin of artificial aids.

The Matterhorn is not a monolith. A study of its complicated geology leaves the inexpert with a complicated headache and a vague idea that this idol has, if not feet, legs of clay with a head of iron, which head may some day come tumbling down into the valley, carrying death and ruin with it—a prospect which is occasionally exploited in sensational manner by periodicals. The Matterhorn, however, has so far kept its head, despite the papers. It makes amends, however, by gashing and rending its torso and showering stones in most unwholesome profusion.

The august isolation of the peak is another and serious obstacle, and one which defeated Whymper on his sixth attempt. There are no adjacent mountains to break up the weather, and a swift stream of cold air may, on striking the rocks, generate a storm which may turn the strongest party, more especially as they have no assurance that there is fair weather above.

Such were some of the difficulties that were to confront Edward Whymper when, in 1861, he wrote with proud confidence: "Edward Whymper, *en route* for the Matterhorn." One, however, he seems to have escaped any strenuous encounters with. The Matterhorn was, like most other mountains, the abode of evil spirits and suchlike vermin who had their abode thereon until exorcised by common sense. Their existence was a local microbe, confined latterly to the peasantry.

Mummery was less fortunate. His guides were greatly afflicted by such unpleasantnesses. On one occasion, when beset by fearsome cohorts of will-o'-the-wisps, he only prevented a precipitate flight by calmly and untruthfully explaining that about every square yard of this England, "this other Eden, demi-Paradise," was carpeted with Robin Goodfellows. Still, no doubt the fear was there, somewhere lurking in the hearts of Whymper's guides, and may have influenced.

One most valuable auxiliary he had, however, unfortunately overlooked, an auxiliary who might have indirectly helped him to immediate victory had—and this is doubtful—efficient guides been available and willing. Years before a greater than Edward Whymper had noted the Matterhorn, a man who, though not a mountaineer, was yet a mountain worshipper—who, though critical of mountaineering venture was yet fourteen years a member of the Alpine Club.

John Ruskin had first been rather repelled than attracted by the Matterhorn, but later, like all other men of sensibility, had succumbed to its spell. His submission exhibited itself in characteristic manner: "We see him busily analysing the perspective of its outlines, calculating the angles of its various ridges"—doing, in fact, exactly what Whymper should have done, making a thorough reconnaissance before attempting an assault. Whymper was in good company in his bad judgment—no less than that of Professor Tyndall. To us, of course, it seems part of the A B C of mountaineering that a mountain is more assailable with than against the tilt of the rocks—that is, if the strata slope downwards to the west, they will tilt upwards to the east, providing better ledges for hand and foot; but then we have Badminton, etc., with plentiful illustrations. Still it does seem remarkable that so observant a man as Tyndall should not have noticed that he was climbing against

the tilt of the rocks. It is the kind of formation that, for the climber, leaves no misapprehension of its existence. There is little doubt that, had Adams Reilly been able to join Whymper, as desired, in an attack on the eastern face, the Matterhorn would, as Whymper believed, have succumbed in 1864—again always provided efficient guides could have been found. It must be remembered that when Whymper did make the proposition, his guides, Almer, Croz, and Biener to wit, shied so badly at the idea that he was obliged to adopt an alternative route, which subjected the party to an intense bombardment of rock and stone that drove the men, terrified and reproachful, off the mountain. They might have been rallied, but bad luck and bad weather intervened.

The pertinacity of description which the appearance of the Matterhorn excites extends even to details of route. The really conscientious student need hardly envy the guide who can lie in bed and remember all the handholds on the ascent; he can lie in bed and read all he needs to know about them. If he has been there, he will not require to get up the details—they will have enforced themselves on his attention at the time; if he has not, acres of print and of photographs would not be of much service. To appreciate the difficulties of a pitch one has to make its intimate acquaintance. The interest now passes from the mountain to the men.

Two men more alike in disposition, yet more unequally yoked, than Edward Whymper and Jean Antoine Carrel it is difficult to conceive. They were both mountaineers, if not of quite the first class, of very high order; both were absolutely fearless and daring to boot; both were of a disposition born to command; both were unflinchingly resolute. Notable, indeed noble qualities these, but—but when two men of a disposition born to command have to work together it is not

often that they work harmoniously. It is written that to command one must first learn to obey. Carrel had been in the army and had seen active service. He had done his duty. He had earned promotion. Presumably, as a soldier he had acquired the habit of obedience, but it seems tolerably certain that he had left that habit behind him with his uniform. Resolution is also a most admirable characteristic, but much depends on its expression. The most perfect definition of "resolute" is that if a man is on your side he is resolute; if he takes an opposite view, he is obstinate. Under Edward Whymper's proud entry, "Edward Whymper, *en route* for the Matterhorn," another hand had written, "This gentleman is always attempting the impossible, and then he curses everybody because he fails in his (*hiatus*) attempts." The writer no doubt regarded Whymper's resolution as obstinacy. There is also an indication of vehemence of expression on the part of Whymper scarcely conducive to good-fellowship. On the other hand, it must be remembered to his credit that he does not seem to have cherished resentment, great though the provocation was, against the man who had disappointed him and worse. There is also a very charming story of his tact and kindness. On one occasion Luc Meynet, the hunchback of Breuil, whom Whymper seems to have regarded with something not far removed from affection, on one occasion asked Michel Croz for the loan of his pipe. Meynet behaved with the utmost courtesy. He waited till Croz had finished smoking, and then, taking off his hat, respectfully made his request, as he had left his own pipe at home. Croz's reply was brutal,

"You might as well have left your head there too, *drôle de bossu*. Do you imagine I am going to lend my pipe to a half-man like you?"

Whymper overheard and intervened. "Here," he said, holding out two cigars to Meynet; "you smoke too."

"This tale," comments Guido Rey, "shows the keen antagonism which existed at that time between Valtournanche guides and those from other places." Nothing, however, could excuse Croz's spitefulness. True it is that thereafter Meynet was distinctly provocative, and that Croz did his best to repay by trying to walk him off his legs. This unchivalrous conduct, coupled with loss of temper, misled Croz into tumbling into a crevasse, and he had to be held up by Meynet. This is good reading.

Carrel himself died the death of a hero on the home side of the Matterhorn, his own mountain, sacrificing himself to the safety of the party under his care. Whymper's words must be quoted; it would be impertinence to do otherwise. "The manner of his death strikes a chord in hearts he never knew. He recognized to the fullest extent the duties of his position, and in the closing act of his life set a brilliant example of fidelity and devotion. For it cannot be doubted that, enfeebled as he was" (Carrel was over sixty at the time, and the weather which attacked the party was appalling—a *tourmente* of snow and wind), "he could have saved himself had he given his attention to self-preservation. He took a nobler course, and, accepting his responsibility, devoted his whole soul to the welfare of his comrades until, utterly exhausted, he fell staggering on the snow. He was already dying. Life was flickering, yet the brave spirit said, 'It is *nothing*.'"

Carrel's chief fault was impatience of control, a characteristic he exhibited in later years with Whymper in the Andes, which connotes a strong sense of self-importance. Added to this was a most ardent local patriotism. Whymper

was only anxious to attain the summit, but cared not two straws by what route. He would have tackled the Zmutt ridge had he suspected it would go, and, incidentally, quite possibly succeeded. Carrel was determined that, if the Matterhorn were climbed at all, the first ascent should be made from the Italian side by a party led by a Valtournanche guide, the name of that guide being Jean Antoine Carrel. Strangely enough it was this very resolution, or obstinacy, which secured for Whymper the honour of the first conquest, and that from the undesirable Zermatt side.

It happened thus. Professor Tyndall, a dangerous if *honourable* rival (it is not without reason this word is italicized), who was no less keen on achievement than Whymper himself, had organized an extremely "dangerous" party—himself, with J. J. Bennen and Anton Walter as guides, and Jean Antoine Carrel, Cæsar Carrel, and another as porters. The composition of the party was admirable, its ordering fatal. They appear to have been stopped by the Enjambée, a deep cleft beyond the shoulder on the Italian face, which Tyndall described, in the bitterness of disappointment, as a stone's-throw from the summit. It is a very long stone's-throw. Bennen appears to have "foozled his approach" by making a direct attack instead of a flanking movement. It seems fairly certain that Carrel must have recognized the error—but said nothing. Arrived at the impasse, Bennen hesitated. Walter quite simply funked it, and the Carrels sulked. When appealed to by Tyndall in this dilemma, they replied: "We are porters; ask your guides." So much for disregarding local prejudice and a man's proper pride. Had Tyndall not made the double mistake, not only of reducing the Carrels to the rank of porter, but of neglecting to give the first place to Jean Antoine (a sad error, as, quite apart from local prejudice,

he was the fittest man for the post), the conquest of the Matterhorn would have been inseparably linked with the name of Tyndall, and most probably without the horrid accompaniment of the great tragedy. "J. A. Carrel," writes Whymper, "not only knew of the existence of this place before they came to it, but always believed in the possibility of passing it, and of ascending the mountain" (he actually did make the first ascent by the Breuil route three days after Whymper's disastrous achievement); "and had he been leader to the party, I do not doubt that he might have taken Tyndall to the top. But when appealed to to assist Bennen (a Swiss, and the recognized leader of the party), was it likely that he (an Italian, a porter), who intended to be the first man up the mountain by a route which he regarded as peculiarly his own, would render any aid?"—a proposition which does not sound to our ears very sportsmanlike, but then we cannot appreciate the local situation, and Whymper could. He was there at the time, and we were not.

Later Carrel threw away with both hands the opportunity of outdistancing Whymper in the race for the summit. Both parties started for the peak from opposite sides, but Carrel was either so confident that the eastern side would prove inaccessible, or quite possibly one of his companions had urged on him the propriety of starting at two, that it is said he refused to move till six. Had he broken camp at an earlier hour the rival forces might have met on the summit, or very possibly the Italians might have reached it first.

> "'Tis not in mortals to command success,
> But we'll do more, Sempronius; we'll deserve it."

Whymper both deserved and achieved. With a dogged tenacity beyond praise, despite manifold natural difficulties,

despite discouragement by adverse weather, discouragement by capricious guides, discouragement by his own countrymen, he kept his hand at the mountain's throat. The last phase of all would have taken the heart out of a man of less constant nature.

" It occurs to us, even now," writes Guido Rey, " so long after the sad event, to ask, with all the respect due from us to the illustrious conqueror of the Matterhorn, how he, who had almost always attacked the mountain alone, refusing all company, ever agreed to give battle at the last with a large party, collected at haphazard, made up of people who were quite unknown to him, among them being a youth who was quite devoid of mountaineering experience ; how he, who knew so well the difficulties of the mountain, ever put himself at the head of a party containing only two guides to four amateurs."

Then follows : " The terrible mistake he was led to make by his feverish anxiety to reach the summit before his rival cost Whymper many a bitter pang of grief."

Before analysing these sentences it will not be lost time to look for an answer to the general proposition in Guido Rey's own book. It is not far to seek. Here is a passage from a letter from Felice Giordano, the " rival," to his friend Quintino Sella :

" I am head over ears in difficulty here, what with the weather, the expense, and Whymper.

" I have tried to keep everything secret, but that fellow, whose life seems to depend on the Matterhorn, is here, suspiciously prying into everything. *I have taken all the competent men away from him*, and yet he is so enamoured of this mountain that he may go up with others and make a scene. He is here, in this hotel, and I try to avoid speaking to him." This is

not pretty reading. It explains why the term " honourable " has been italicized in connection with Tyndall's rivalry.

The occasions on which Whymper " almost always attacked the mountain alone " are as follows : 1861. Aug. 29, 30. Camped upon the mountain with an Oberland guide. 1862. July 7, 8. P. J. S. Macdonald, E. Whymper. *Guides*, Johann zum Taugwald and Johann Kronig. July 9, 10. Macdonald and Whymper. *Guides*, J. A. Carrel and Pession. July 18, 19, Whymper, ALONE. July 23, 24. Whymper. *Guides*, J. A. Carrel, Cæsar Carrel, and Luc Meynet. July 25, 26. Whymper *and* Luc Meynet. 1863. Whymper. *Guides*, J. A. Carrel, Cæsar Carrel, Luc Meynet, and *two porters*. 1865. July 21. Whymper. *Guides*, Michel Croz, Christian Almer, Franz Biener, *porter*, Luc Meynet. True it is that Whymper made sundry reconnaissances alone, but there is a distinction between a reconnaissance and an attack. As for the one and only solitary " attack," this is what Whymper writes : " Only 1,800 feet remained, etc. No man could expect to climb them by himself. . . . I went to Zermatt on the chance of picking up a man. . . . I returned to Breuil . . . hoping to combine the skill of Carrel with the willingness of Meynet. . . . I was alone, because no man was available." Signor Guido Rey may be acquitted out of hand of intentional misrepresentation, but his statements are misleading, and it is time to correct them.

The answer to the question how Whymper agreed to give battle with a haphazard party is as follows. He had been climbing with Christian Almer and Franz Biener for three weeks in June and July, 1865, and strongly desired that they should join him in an attempt on the Matterhorn, but they practically refused point blank. " Anything but the Matterhorn ! " was Almer's expression, a complement to the " Why don't you try to go up a mountain that can be ascended ? " of

Almer, and the "It is impossible!" of Biener, when the party had been turned by a rock avalanche two years previously. Whymper thereupon went on 6th July to Breuil, where he found Carrel, just returned from an alleged attempt on the peak. To him he proposed that the two, with Cæsar Carrel and another man, should cross the Theodule on 9th July, and pitch a tent as high up as possible on the east face. After some demur, in favour of the Breuil route, Carrel consented. On the 9th Whymper went down the valley to see a sick Englishman, and *en route* encountered a gentleman, a mule, and sundry porters, including J. A. Carrel and Cæsar, carrying barometers. They explained that the gentleman had arrived just as they were setting out, and that they were assisting his porters, and J. A. went on to say that neither he nor his brother would be available after the 11th, as they were engaged to travel with a "family of distinction," in the valley of Aosta. The engagement had been of long standing, but Carrel had only learned the date on the night of the 7th. Once again Whymper met Carrel, who said in the course of conversation that he would like to accompany him, but that his word was pledged. On the morning of the 11th Whymper was to learn that a strong party, including the Carrels, had started that morning from Breuil, where he was actually sleeping, for the Matterhorn.

It is a question to what extent Carrel was lying on this occasion. If Whymper be correct, that the affair had been arranged long beforehand, and that the start on the 6th had been a reconnaissance, if it were known to the Carrels that the "family of distinction" was Signor Giordano, the answer sounds sadly like "all along the line." Whymper's vigorous expression that he had been bamboozled and humbugged encourages the explanation that it was a put-up job to jockey

Whymper out of the running, and that Carrel was "in the know." If this be so, the paragraph quoted from Signor Giordano's letter makes more unpleasant reading than ever.

That is how it was that Whymper came to attack the mountain with a haphazard party.

The composition of this celebrated party demands detail. (1) Whymper; (2) Michel Croz, an experienced guide of giant strength, great skill and resource; (3) Peter Taugwalder, the father, a good, sound, reliable guide, something above the average; (4) and (5) his sons, guides in training, acting as porters. A porter is necessarily, in a restricted sense, a sound mountaineer. He must be capable of following safely, though not necessarily of leading or of difficult step-cutting. Only Peter, junior, went on to the summit. His brother returned alone from a height of 11,000 feet, which, after all, was something of a performance.

So far there is no fault to be found in the composition.

(6) The Rev. Charles Hudson, who was considered by the mountaineering fraternity to be the best amateur of his time. He had organized and led a guideless party of Englishmen up Mont Blanc by the Aiguille de Goûter, descending by the Grands Mulets route. (7) Lord Francis Douglas, a very young man who "had had several seasons in the Alps, and was becoming an expert mountaineer." He had recently ascended the Ober Gabelhorn. His inclusion in the party may therefore be considered at any rate justifiable. Given certain conditions, the Matterhorn by the eastern face might almost be called an easy mountain. Under no conceivable conditions could such a term be applied to the Ober Gabelhorn. (8) D. Hadow. Hadow seems to have been typical of his family, a sportsman to his finger-tips, with pluck enough for a forlorn hope, but he was an absolute novice. He was only

nineteen, and it was his first season in the Alps. His inclusion in an expedition to attempt the ascent of a difficult mountain, which had already turned several strong parties, was unwarrantable—it is difficult not to use a harsher word.

The responsibility for this error of judgment lies entirely with Hudson, though, to do him justice, it would have been a responsibility he would have been the last to disclaim. He had come to Zermatt with Michel Croz and Hadow with the intention of essaying the Matterhorn, and the attempt he would have made, and taken Hadow with him, whether Whymper had been there or not. Whymper and Lord Francis Douglas had already engaged their man, Peter Taugwalder, *père*. Hudson and Whymper joined forces because they "agreed that it was undesirable that two parties should be on the same mountain at the same time with the same object." In this light Guido Rey's comment, "The terrible mistake he was led to make by his feverish anxiety to reach the summit before his rival cost Whymper many a bitter pang of grief," is a hard saying. The attempt would have been made on that occasion by an English party from the Zermatt side, Whymper or no Whymper.

As a matter of fact, Whymper was in a very difficult position. He recognized that Hudson should be regarded as leader. "I should," he writes, "have been content to place myself under his orders had he chosen to claim the position to which he was entitled." Still he seems to be uneasy as to Hadow's inclusion: "I took the precaution to inquire what he had done in the Alps, and, as well as I remember, Mr. Hudson's reply was, 'Mr. Hadow has done Mont Blanc in less time than most men.' * He then mentioned several other

* Hadow's times were: From the Grands Mulets to the summit, 4½ hours; from the summit to Chamonix, 5 hours.

excursions that were unknown to me, and added, in answer to a further question, ' I consider he is a sufficiently good man to go with us.' " Hudson's opinion, thus expressed, was final, but a mistake, and not, alas ! his last.

Hadow was not the only dangerous constituent of the expedition. There was another which might have proved graver still had the weather turned evil—its size. For " rush tactics " on unknown peaks of unknown difficulty caravans are assuredly not desirable. The greater the number of the party the slower its pace always, and the greater the danger in places where the ground is sufficiently easy for the party to move all together but sufficiently steep to render a slip on the part of any one member extremely undesirable. In the matter of guides, " Hudson thought that Croz and old Peter would be sufficient," and if it had been decided that Hudson and Whymper should have made up the complement, with perhaps one of the young Taugwalders as porter " so far," all should have been well. As it was, every increase of numerical strength was an increase of weakness.

The weather, however, proved kindly, and the party made excellent progress to a height of 11,000 feet, stimulated by the encouraging discovery that they could actually run about on places which had hitherto appeared impracticable. At this point they stopped to pitch their camp, whilst Croz and young Peter went ahead to prospect and prepare the way. By-and-by they were observed returning " much excited," and this heralded the only shock of the day, for old Peter, who seems to have regarded the mountain with a jaundiced eye, announced that they were saying, " It was no good." Surely if Pilatus is the " shrine " of Pontius Pilate, the Matterhorn, judging from Carrel and old Peter, must be that of Ananias. The report was : " Nothing but what was good ; not a diffi-

THE MATTERHORN, EAST FACE.

(Photo, J. F. Burton.)

culty—not a single difficulty! We could have gone to the summit and returned to-day easily." On this occasion it would seem that Croz and young Peter had triumphed over the genius of the mountain.

Next morning the party, excepting the youngest Taugwalder, who returned, were away as soon as there was light enough to see, and rattled upwards happily. The going seems to have been easy enough—" for the greater part of the way there was no occasion for the rope "—and now Hudson would take the lead, now Whymper, cutting steps where necessary. This was a politic device to " encourage " the guides. Croz was probably unconcerned, but old Peter had been in pessimistic mood on the previous evening, and Whymper had experienced quite enough disappointments on the mountain to risk his men being " feared with bugs," or disgruntled by unaided work. Where " Herren " led and cut steps with safety, what could they do but cheerfully follow? At length they arrived at a point where these practices had to cease and the order of march was changed. The vanguard was very strong, Croz leading, Whymper second, Hudson third, Lord Francis and young Peter in the middle, and Hadow and old Peter last. It was an awkward stretch. The angle was not very great, not so much as 40°, but that is quite steep enough when one has to work up glazed rocks with poor holds. Hudson seems to have gone extremely well over this awkward section, better than Whymper himself, but Hadow " required continual assistance." " It is only fair to say that the difficulty which he found on this part arose simply and entirely from want of experience."

This is a graceful way of saying that Hadow's trouble was not due to lack of nerve or courage, which were unimpeachable. It does not—it never can—explain away the fact

that he had no business to be there, or rather no one had any business to take him there or allow him to come there. A few seasons later he could have made the ascent with enjoyment and impunity. The Matterhorn would still have been there. These considerations are emphasized because this weak, good-natured inability to say "No!" or happy-go-lucky carelessness, are not of yesterday only.

The summit was reached at 1.40 p.m., very good time for a long party, handicapped by "a lame duck." It was a glorious victory, meriting the victor's crown for all ages—so far. What happened thereafter is inexplicable, or can only be explained by the assumption that in the moment of triumph Whymper lost his head. Here are his own words :

"It was not yet certain we had not been beaten. The summit of the Matterhorn was formed of a rudely level ridge, about 350 feet long, and the Italians might have been at its farther extremity. I hastened to its southern end, scanning the snow right and left eagerly. Hurrah again—it was untrodden! 'Where were the men?' I peered over the cliff, half doubting, half expectant, and saw them immediately—mere dots on the ridge at an immense distance below. Up went my arms and my hat. 'Croz! Croz! come here!' 'Where are they, monsieur?' 'There—don't you see them?—down there!' 'Ah, the *coquins*, they are low down.' 'Croz, we must make those fellows hear us.' We yelled until we were hoarse. The Italians seemed to regard us—we could not be certain. 'Croz, we *must* make them hear us; they *shall* hear us.' I seized a block of rock and hurled it down, and called on my companion, in the name of friendship, to do the same. We drove our sticks in, and prized away the crags, and soon a torrent of stones poured down the cliffs. There was no mistake about it this time. The Italians turned and fled."

Having quite unblushingly penned this outrageous paragraph, Whymper continues : " Still, I would that the leader of that party could have stood with us at that moment," after having done all that in him lay to break his head. No one can foretell the course which a stone will take down an open mountain side, still less of the material it may start. The Italians themselves represented that the spirits of the mountain had hurled stones at them, which suggests, at least, that some of the débris came uncomfortably near. Whymper himself had had an unpleasant experience of " ricochet practice " on the mountain only two seasons before.

The story of the catastrophe is adapted in brief from Whymper, the only authority, with comments where deemed desirable. Hudson and he consulted as to the order of the party, which was arranged as follows : (1) Croz ; (2) Hadow ; (3) Hudson ; (4) Lord Francis ; (5) old Peter, as the strongest of the remainder. It is the custom now that the best man of the party should lead up and follow down, but in the *Alpine Journal* of those days one frequently reads of the leader going down first. There may, moreover, have been excellent reasons for sending Croz first. Indeed there is a hint that all was not well with old Peter, as will appear later. Putting Hadow, the weakest man in the party, next to the leader is inexplicable. One would have thought he would have been tucked away between the Taugwalders, with either Hudson or Whymper, failing Croz, following down.

So much for the order. Now for the rope, another important factor. There were 200 feet of Manila rope, 150 feet of stouter—probably, Whymper thinks, stronger—rope, and more than 200 feet of stout sash-line. This last was intended as a reserve emergency rope, either to be used if the other were exhausted by being cut and left behind on difficult parts,

or to be fastened to rocks as an additional safeguard. Whymper did propose that it should be so fastened on the descent, and Hudson approved; but the suggestion was not carried out. Now comes a curious feature. All the victims were tied together with the stronger rope, and the only link where the weak rope was used was between old Peter Taugwalder and Lord Francis. Of course suspicion at once fell on the guide, but Whymper is at pains to exculpate him. In any case the supposition that he should have tied himself on to the rest of the party with a line calculated to break in the event of a slip is so far fetched as to be absurd. Also, Alpine guides are notoriously bad judges of what constitutes a good rope, besides which, anything English is, or was, something of a fetish to them. They would trust a worn English clothes line rather than a brand new Austrian rope. Probably old Peter hitched on with the first bit handy. Whymper was some distance off when the tying on was in process. It was probably done by the guides, and Hudson, finding himself on an unimpeachable rope, would never have dreamed of any of inferior quality being used elsewhere along the line.

Whymper was some distance off. He had stayed sketching whilst the party were tying on, and at the last moment some one remembered that the names had not been left in a bottle. He was requested to write them down and leave them, and whilst he was thus occupied the main party moved on. Whymper then tied on to young Peter, ran down after them, and caught them just as they were commencing the descent on the difficult part.

"Great care was being taken. Only one man was moving at a time; when he was firmly planted the next advanced, and so on. They had not, however, attached the additional rope to the rocks, and nothing was said about it. The sug-

gestion was not made for my own sake, and I am not sure that it even occurred to me again. For some little distance we two followed the others, detached from them, and should have continued so had not Lord Francis Douglas asked me, about 3 p.m., to tie on to old Peter, as he feared, he said, that Taugwalder would not be able to hold his ground if a slip occurred."

Now it was with old Peter Taugwalder that Lord Francis had made the ascent of the Ober Gabelhorn. It does seem that all was not well with old Peter.

"Michel Croz had laid aside his axe and, in order to give Mr. Hadow greater security, was taking hold of his legs and putting his feet one by one into their proper positions. . . . Croz, having done as I said, was in the act of turning round to go down a step or two himself; at this moment Mr. Hadow slipped, fell against him, and knocked him over. I heard one startled exclamation from Croz, and then saw him and Mr. Hadow flying downwards; in another moment Hudson was dragged from his steps, and Lord Francis Douglas immediately after him. All this was the work of a moment. Immediately we heard Croz's exclamation, old Peter and I . . . held on as tightly as possible; the rope was taut between us, and the jerk came on us as one man. We held; but the rope broke midway between Taugwalder and Lord Francis Douglas. For a few seconds we saw our unfortunate companions sliding downwards on their backs, and spreading out their hands, endeavouring to save themselves. They passed from our sight uninjured, disappeared one by one, and fell from precipice to precipice on to the Matterhorn *gletscher* below, a distance of nearly 4,000 feet in height. From the moment the rope broke it was impossible to help them."

(Footnote): "Croz's axe was out of his reach, and without

it he managed to get his head uppermost before he disappeared from our sight. If it had been in his hand, I have no doubt he would have stopped himself and Mr. Hadow." This is interesting but not instructive. Croz no doubt fought desperately. This brave man's last word was "Impossible." The next portion of the footnote is illuminating.

"Mr. Hadow at the moment of the slip was not occupying a bad position. He could have moved either up or down, and could touch with his hand the rock of which I have spoken. Hudson was not so well placed, but he had liberty of motion. The rope was not taut from him to Hadow, and the two men fell 10 or 12 feet before the jerk came upon him. Lord Francis Douglas was not favourably placed, and could move neither up nor down. Old Peter was firmly planted."

Later, Whymper adds: "We were compelled to pass over the exact spot where the slip occurred, and we found, even with shaken nerves, that it was not a difficult place to pass. . . . Mr. Hadow slipped at a comparatively easy part."

This footnote is, as has been observed, illuminating. It explains the cause of this dreadful catastrophe far more fully than the text, though that is not uninstructive, more especially in a subsequent sentence: "After a time we were able to do that which should have been done at first, and fixed ropes to firm rocks, in addition to being tied together."

The capital cause of the mishap was, of course, the inclusion of Mr. Hadow, but there was another, subsidiary but certainly no less grave, by the remedying of which the danger due to Hadow's inclusion might and could have been neutralized—in two words, bad mountaineering.

That a fixed rope was not employed was no doubt an oversight due to carelessness, but on dangerous places carelessness is culpable, more especially in a situation in which, during the

ascent, one of the party had been in continuous difficulties. Failing a fixed rope, one is driven to wonder how it was that not one of the party seems to have thought of securing himself by hitching the rope over some convenient spike of rock. Belaying was not then so insistently practised as it is—*theoretically*—to-day, but it does seem strange that not one of the party resorted to this rudimentary method of securing a stance. The passage must have altered out of all knowledge in the last sixty years, but surely, surely, if there were opportunities to fix ropes which "were cut from time to time and left behind," there must have been opportunities for hitching.

Many a time have questions been asked as to how Hadow could have come to slip after Croz had so carefully adjusted his feet. These questions generally come from the inexperienced. Many, many climbers have known, in their salad days, what it is to get stuck in such a position that they do not seem able to move forwards or backwards. This is due to their having got their feet all wrong—a mistake which is frequently emphasized by "a perfectly uncontrollable" (to quote Dr. Claud Wilson) trembling of the legs. This quite possibly befell Hadow. A position which might have seemed quite all right for Croz may have been quite all wrong for him. A very, very slight shifting of pose makes all the difference.

"Only one man was moving at a time; when he was firmly planted" is the main text. The footnote shows convincingly that not one man on the rope was firmly fixed, except old Peter, who was looking after himself and hugging a rock. So far as one can judge, the party seems to have been afflicted by that poisonous economy of rope which infected the first generation of climbers. They had some 200 feet of rope for a party of five, which works out at 40 feet per man, which is inadequate for serious work.

Lastly, the rope was not taut from Hudson to Hadow, and the two men (Croz and Hadow) "fell 10 or 12 feet before the jerk came upon him." This statement sounds incredible, but there is no reason to doubt its accuracy. Hudson must or should have known that an Alpine rope was tested to stand a dead weight up to 2,000 pounds, but would break with a strain of 10 stone dropping 12 feet clean—a jerk which would dislodge a bullock; yet, not too securely placed, he allowed all that slack between himself and a rickety novice. That is why it has been written earlier that Hudson's mistake of urging the inclusion of Hadow was not his last. Whymper was of opinion that had the rope been as taut between Hudson and Hadow as between himself and Taugwalder, the accident would have been averted. Probably he is right—assuredly, if the rope had been held taut all along the line, even allowing for the insecure placing and Taugwalder's miserable sash-line.

Finally the survivors, thanks entirely to Whymper's nerve and skill, were brought safely off the mountain. This appreciation of that great mountaineer is not written as a patriotic eulogy, but because it is a fact. Those who are familiar with the original narrative will agree that the less said about the Taugwalders' conduct after the accident the better.

THE COL DU LION

THE Matterhorn had been conquered. It had been carried by storm from east and west. Following in Carrel's footsteps came Giordano, Grove, and Leighton Jordan. The tragedy of the first ascent seems to have clouded the eastern face with a feeling akin to awe. Not fear—but it is, after all, unseemly to take one's pleasure on the tombstone of four gallant fellow-craftsmen. Then, after a due interval, Tyndall pressed home the seal of conquest by making the traverse of the mountain from Breuil to Zermatt.

Still, the Matterhorn had been pronounced inaccessible, and that by opinion not to be lightly set aside. Whymper writes: "My old enemy, the Matterhorn, seen from across the basin of the Z'muttgletscher, looked totally unassailable. 'Do you think,' the men" (Michel Croz and Christian Almer) "asked, 'that you, or any one else, will ever get up that mountain?' And when, undismayed by their ridicule, I stoutly answered, 'Yes, but not upon that side,' they burst into derisive chuckles." With the passing of years, and the expansion of the mountaineering outlook, it was inevitable that climbers of a later school should question this alleged inaccessibility. The two earliest routes up the Matterhorn had been pronounced impossible, but had yielded. Might there not be other ways of access? Wherefore it is not sur-

prising to read that some fifteen years after the first victory Mummery attacked the very ridge Whymper had deemed impossible, and conquered. Encouraged thereby he, " warring on a later day," assailed the Furggen Ridge, which also looked and actually proved impracticable, as it has done ever since, despite Guido Rey's most determined attempt, which carried him almost within touch of the summit.

Not that Mummery was out of training or ill-supported. He had Burgener and Venetz with him, and about a fortnight earlier he and Burgener had been indulging in a preliminary canter which may rank as about the most crack-brained, sporting, dare-devil expedition on record—the ascent of the Col du Lion.

Now a really self-respecting *col* is a definite depression between two definite elevations affording a passage from one side of a ridge to the other, seriously difficult perhaps, but still less difficult—or at least more convenient and direct—than the traverse of either of the flanking elevations. How far the Col du Lion fulfilled these qualifications may be judged from Mummery's own words : " It was brought home to my mind that no more difficult, circuitous, and inconvenient method of getting from Zermatt to Breuil could possibly be devised than by using this same col as a pass." Observe ! He was not anxious to get to Breuil in a hurry. In fact, he did not want to get there at all. He was fulfilling the climbing ideal as defined by an unkind critic : " You must leave every path common sense, custom, or the average mountain sheep would point out . . . and go in some other direction where the chances appear to be in favour of breaking your neck." His object was to see whether the tremendous rock-face opposite him would go. If it did, it would be a glorious victory, an abiding joy. If not, at the foot of the precipice, where the

rocks abutted on the ice, was a yawning crevasse, a mighty bergschrund, which would swallow up all objects falling down the crags—himself included. Elated by such prospects, he communicated these inspiriting ideas to his guide, Alexander Burgener. Burgener, after a long consultation, part of a bottle of Bouvier, and a hearty pull at the brandy flask, decided that it might go, it would go, and so they decided to have a go at it.

Of this attractive ascent Whymper wrote: "On one side a sheer wall overhung the Tieffenmatten glacier. Throw a bottle down—no sound returns for more than twelve seconds." Tyndall and others had examined it and pronounced it hopeless. Burgener would probably not have attempted a first ascent without Mummery, nor Mummery without Burgener. The only real difficulties appear to have been getting into a tremendous couloir or open gully, getting out of it, and getting up it. Incidentally this gully seamed most of the projected line of ascent. Also it was complicated "by a repulsive section" about two-thirds of the way up, where some rocks broke through, leaving two narrow gullies of black, shining ice as alternative "only ways," coupled with the certain knowledge that if you did get stuck in it, it would not be for long. As soon as the sun got to work you would be knocked out of it by falling stones, to finish your career in the bergschrund below.

It is common knowledge—that is to say, about one out of a thousand educated persons is aware—that the everlasting hills are incessantly getting worn away by weathering and other agencies, of which frost is one of the most active. By it, above the snow-line, large quantities of surface material are prised out at night, but nevertheless retained for the most part *in situ* so long as the cold lasts. When the sun comes out

it melts the frost, the frost releases its grip, and away goes the stone on an express journey valleywards.

Mummery and Burgener decided to start at 10 p.m. for this holiday jaunt, but owing to sundry mishaps and misunderstandings they did not get off till 1 a.m. In view of the possible activities of the sun the delay was serious. The Matterhorn had a specially evil reputation for stone-throwing: on one occasion it held up a party by a continuous discharge lasting three hours. Nevertheless they plugged on. The bergschrund was passed somehow, and then the two committed themselves to sundry strips of snow, consoling themselves with the cheerful certainty that, should the essay prove impracticable, to utilize such snow as a return route was certain death. At length they reached the repulsive section. There they realized, whole-heartedly, the danger of the late start. The right-hand branch looked the easier, but—high up on the tremendous precipice of the Matterhorn—the sun was loosening the grip of the frost, and the stones were obeying the law of gravity and seeking that branch as the most natural channel of obedience. That way was closed.

The position, serious before, now approximated to the desperate, but Burgener went doggedly to work. Burgener was an admirable guide—indeed, to quote C. T. Dent, an exceptional guide, although lacking the marvellous neatness and finish of Melchior Anderegg, "the best guide that ever lived." Also Burgener was "the embodiment of strength, endurance, and pluck."

Strangely this enormous strength was something of a danger. He does not seem to have recognized his own power. When, step-cutting, he got annoyed with the ice, he "gave it a good hard knock" with his axe. He got annoyed with this ice, gave it a good hard knock, and broke his axe. It is not an

easy thing to do, but, according to Mummery, it was not an infrequent occurrence with Burgener. The position now became desperate. What happened is best told in Mummery's own words.

"Midway in an ice-couloir, 2,000 feet high, a single axe alone stood between us and utter helplessness. I untied and carefully lashed my axe to the rope, and sent it up to Burgener. The rope then declined to come back anywhere within my reach, and I had the pleasure of ascending the next 80 feet without its moral support, and, which was worse, without an axe. Rejoining Burgener, the broken weapon was made over to me." There followed a really terrible passage, rather than face which even Burgener counselled retreat, despite the practical certainty of "destruction in the rear." Nevertheless, encouraged by Mummery—one of the instances in which the spirit of the amateur has pulled the guide through—he laid hold on the ice with his left hand and commenced cutting steps with his right. More than once he had to return to restore circulation to the fingers of his left hand, whilst his right wrist swelled most painfully under the strain of cutting. Yet they won through, and eventually gained the ridge. Mummery seems to have been somewhat exhausted and to have found the diagonal passage to the finish trying, for "it was with no little delight that, on reaching the gap in the cornice, I saw a red hand appear, and a moment later was hauled bodily on to the pass." Burgener does not seem to have been quite completely played out.

THE MISCHABELHÖRNER

"Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise."

"There is probably no pleasure equal to the pleasure of climbing a dangerous Alp, but it is a pleasure strictly confined to people who can find pleasure in it."

THE human make-up—complex is the favourite word to-day—is apparently sweetly trustful. It accepts as correct all sorts and descriptions of commonplaces with a childlike simplicity which is above—or below—all praise. Take, for example, "The unruly member;" "We shall meet again at Philippi;" "Pride goeth before a fall;" "A poor thing, but my own"—familiar quotations in every one's mouth. Nevertheless one may search the Bible and Shakespeare, their presumptive origin, in vain for any one of them. As a matter of fact the human make-up is incurably lazy and abominably slipshod. The climbing a dangerous Alp is an impossibility, though in the mouth of a man "with a mind on a rational basis," who walks on a road, it is pardonable. The sin lies at the doors of the mountaineers. They know, and knew, perfectly well that an Alp is not a mountain at all, but merely a mountain pasture whereon the nimble chamois of the peaks and crags is represented by the leisurely cow. Consequently it is abundantly clear that the Alpine Club proper should be an association of upland farmers.

It is just as well not to insist on this in the neighbourhood of Savile Row.

After this, it is pardonable for the man in any other street to speak of Mont Blanc, the monarch of mountains, as the highest mountain in Switzerland. Almost every one is aware that it is not the highest in Europe owing to the utterly illogical intrusion of the Caucasus : that is one of the few bits of school geography that sticks. Mont Blanc, however, is not the highest mountain in Switzerland, because it is in France. The highest mountain in Switzerland is the Dôm, the loftiest of the three peaks of the Mischabelhörner. It is not, however, the altitude—14,395 feet—of the Mischabelhörner that is remarkable ; there are " a hundred and a hundred savage peaks " higher in Asia and America. It is that it was the theatre of the most extraordinary climbing achievement on record. Moreover, conceding that Alp, "in the vulgar," signifies a peak above the snow-line, the second proposition at the head of this chapter may be taken as generally correct. The adventure of the Mischabelhörner is an exception. Its accomplishment can arouse, even in retrospect, in the breasts of those who took part in it no feeling of pleasure save, perhaps, a remote sense of thanksgiving.

The Mischabelhörner approximate to the ideal mountain. From actual attainment thereto they are debarred by their plural number. They are roughly composed of three peaks—the Südlenspitz, the Dôm, and the Täschhorn. The ideal mountain possesses one peak only. A very tolerable illustration of this ideal can be obtained by picking up a newly washed and tolerably starched table napkin by the centre and lifting the hand some four or five inches from the table in such a way that the creases radiate from the central, the summit, point (held between finger and thumb) in well-defined ridges, leaving between them broad, open faces, the apex of each of which connects with the actual summit. These ridges, or

arêtes, form the natural routes of ascent. They may be very narrow and exposed, but, relatively to the faces, they are safe. They are not swept by avalanches. They are not generally ornamented with hanging glaciers. They are not frequently bombarded by loose stones. It is not easy to get hit on the head by a stone one is standing on, or which one has left behind and below one. Such as do come down from above usually hop off to the right or left after a bounce or two, thereby augmenting the perils of those who approach by the face.

These perils are manifold. Faces are necessarily at a higher angle than the containing ridges. Advance has often to be made by cutting steps up and across ice-slopes, a slip on which may endanger the whole party. Also they are liable to be swept by all descriptions of mountain artillery—snow-avalanches, rock-avalanches, playful stone-falls, single stones, to say nothing of being garnished with hanging-glaciers, impassable barriers of ice which contrive to maintain a precarious balance at most unlikely angles, to the steepness of which they testify by detaching at uncertain intervals a *sérac*. A *sérac* is a splinter of ice varying in size from that of a church steeple to the pier of a bridge or the hull of a ship, and when it takes to glissading down ice-slopes, it cleans up everything in its path as with the besom of destruction.

Men cast amorous eyes on these Gorgon faces, and proved that they were to be wooed and won—that they were not as repulsive in fact as in grim appearance—by starting at the base and arriving alive at the top. One such was Mr. G. W. Young, who successfully attacked and vanquished the western face of that ideal mountain, the Weisshorn. Later he turned his attention to the southern face of the Täschhorn, one of the nearly ideal Mischabelhörner. They would, in fact, be wholly

THE TÄSCHHORN AND TEUFELSGRAT.
(*Photo, Abraham, Keswick.*)

ideal but for the disability of having three peaks instead of only one. As a consequence, the various rock faces and *arêtes* do not sort out and fit in quite artistically. This lack of adjustment, however, does not prevent either face or *arête* being magnificent. Thus we come to the full-blooded proposition of attaining the goal by "by-paths and indirect crook'd ways," with a bare margin of safety—with this modification: for "indirect, crook'd" must be substituted "most direct possible." (See page 18.)

For a time the great *arête* of the Täschhorn had the pre-eminence, one of the reasons being that it was magnificent—the other, that no one in his senses looked more than twice at the face. This does not imply that those who at last tackled this were out of their senses. The party simply did not realize what it was up against. Its components had gone forth so often conquering and to conquer the alleged impossible that they had come, not without reason, to question the impracticability of any ascent which was not quite obviously either suicidal or beyond human skill and strength—such as walking along a ceiling like a fly. Had they realized what they were taking in hand, they would never have started. The story will be told later on. It is serious enough. First of all to trifle—on paper only—with the ridge.

The first ascent of the Teufelsgrat—the Devil's Ridge—with Mrs. Mummery as its *sacra vates*, is one of the most delightful mountaineering romances. Of course every one knows it by heart, and every one else has read it; but those who have not will, of course, remember how Alexander the Great, the mighty Burgener, strove to induce Mrs. Mummery to undertake an expedition on which she had set her whole heart by assuring her that it was "more beautiful as the Matterhorn," how they arrived at an Alp, the genuine article, and were therefrom

scared by a bull into a little involuntary bouldering on the top of the first elevation handy; how, after having been treed on the roof of a shed (the excitement of the incident permits broken metaphor), down they swept and charged, their red—or rather, blue—right hands grasping a dozen ice-axes, and, if they did not overthrow, routed the Minotaur; how they had a Pyrrhic, or Bacchic, dance in the Shed of Deliverance, and how the Minotaur tried to butt in quite literally; how, on essaying the ascent of the Ridge, the early efforts of the party came near to frustration through the opposition of the demons of ill luck; how one such pushed a hulking block of stone on to Burgener's thumb, crushing it so badly that he complained that he was no more strong in that hand, albeit the scanty reserve would have satisfied three ordinary individuals; how, a little farther on, a really spiteful fiend shoved off his somewhat delicate perch Andenmatten, who was acting as leading guide, *vice* Burgener's damaged thumb, frightened him out of his wits, and shook his nerves to rags; how deftly Burgener fielded him; how skilfully Mrs. Mummery, proud in her acquirements of first aid malevolence, pulled and punched him; how they came to the Gap, which even Burgener pronounced "Impossible"; how the "impossible" proved amenable to the fondling of skill and experience; how valuable an asset is Bouvier in discouraging circumstances; how the summit of the Täschhorn was reached in rapidly worsening weather; how Burgener, reminiscent doubtless of "Alpine" life, drove Mrs. Mummery down the mountain, bidding her not to care whether she stumbled or not, because, in chivalrous metaphor, he could a cow hold there.

Of course the Teufelsgrat was not really mastered in this rattle-trap fashion. That it was a first ascent of doubtful feasibility at a time when men were forcing the Z'mutt *arête*,

the Grépon, and so forth, signifies much ; that the Gap was of such terrific aspect as to cause Burgener, the conqueror of the Col du Lion and the Dru, to pronounce it impossible, signifies much more.

These gaps, when worthy the name, are always serious obstacles on *arêtes*. That on the Teufelsgrat is typical, only more so. It is as if the ridge had been cleft by a gigantic chopper, and slightly overhangs on the side nearest the mountain. The base of the cleft is narrower than it has any business to be, and on either side is a convenient channel for anything which slips down the gap—the climbers, for example—to reach the glacier, an excessive number of feet below. It possesses, however, one distinctive feature. The commencement of the continuation of the *arête* towards the mountain is V-shaped, like a narrow gigantic wedge of rock standing on its end, and apparently so insecure on its base that it seems that a slight disturbance of equilibrium might send it over to one side or the other. Fortunately this tendency is only apparent, otherwise the continuation of the ridge towards the summit would not be followed with the sense of relief now experienced on reaching its crest.

This V-shaped wedge formation is not unique. It is really remarkable how many parallels to great mountain features can be "distilled out" on the small British hills. Most Scottish mountaineers are acquainted with the scramble along the A'Chir ridge in the island of Arran. Just south of the northern block, on which the *Mauvais Pas* is, a rough replica in miniature of the Teufelsgrat gap may be "distilled," with its precariously poised V-shaped continuation of the commencement of the ridge to the north. True it is that there is rather a notable difference in scale. One can step across the A'Chir gap from one side, though that would be rather a jolty,

even risky, proceeding, and some geniuses or other got down into it, pretty nearly got pounded, and wrote to the public to say so.

Notwithstanding these manifold allurements, Mr. Young seems to have regarded the Teufelsgrat with a good deal of dislike, perhaps even contempt. True it is that it presents a most aggressive aspect. It is manifestly intrusive. Mr. Young not unnaturally resented the Devil's Ridge sticking its cloven hoof into a fair land, garlanded with meadows, but one cannot help thinking he must have said so at one time or the other, and that within earshot. It is never safe to speak disparagingly of other people's property within earshot of the owner, especially when that owner has such an unscrupulous and vindictive temper as the lord of the manor in question. Be that as it may, Mr. Young was once caught on the Teufelsgrat, and had such a devil of a time as to lend colour to the suggestion that he must have spoken out quite loud unwarily. If so, he was paid quittance in full. He was not killed, but he was badly frightened, and made " to feel d—d small." Every infernal device that malevolence could conjure up from the vasty "down there" was brought into action. In fact, by some malignant concentration of the forces of Nature the Teufelsgrat was transformed into a veritable live-rail, to the accompaniment of a savage hurricane. The metal rims of the goggles commenced to tingle, the heads of the ice-axes spluttered and hissed. The temptation to throw away axes was tremendous, but to do so, in such a situation, was to cut off the only means of escape. The choice presented to the party was between annihilation by electrocution, or a " fair, strae death " on a mountain side—a prospect which enamours no one, even though a mountain may be " an excellent place to die on." Worst of all, paralyzing both nerve and body, were the shocks

thrown off by the Teufelsgrat itself, as if the ridge had been some gigantic petrified Gymnotus rousing itself again to malevolent existence ; and all the while the wind was blowing stones away from the *arête* like twigs from a dry tree. After a prolonged period of this dreadful torment the party sighted a way of escape from the hell above, and cut their way down a couloir into a paradise of sunshine and smiling landscape.

Like experiences can befall, even in England. A well-known scrambler walked down from Scafell into a cloud in Hollow Stones near the base of the crags. It was a thunder-cloud, and advertised the fact when he was right in the middle of it. For the next few minutes he was the most frightened man in the forty counties. There is, however, no matching in the annals of the homeland the experience now to be recounted.

This venture was the ascent of the southern face of the Täschhorn.

The face itself roughly resembles the wall of a gigantic gable some thousands of feet in height. Although not vertical and holdless like the wall of a house, the precipice is exceptionally steep, and the holds unusually unsatisfactory. It may be taken as read that every member of the assailing force now in being is of opinion that the venture should not have been undertaken, or, if undertaken, persisted in ; yet this must not be interpreted as a statement that either attempt or persistence were inexcusable. It is very seldom that any considerable extent of cliff, even of, say, 300 feet, is as bad as it looks, or anything like as bad as it looks. So much for the first count. As for the second, it is a very general experience that, when difficulties are becoming insuperable, the chances are that they will ease off before very long, or, in other words, that very long stretches of very difficult rock, without respite,

are very rare. Now the south face of the Täschhorn was a great deal worse than it looked, and the difficulties did not moderate. About the only change in the angle of severity was when bad became worse, whereafter a return to its original standard of iniquity was welcomed with relief. Finally, when the party were really and deeply committed to the climb, it was safer to advance than retreat, and advance was along the razor edge of the impracticable.

The face had been carefully examined, and examination assuredly did not show it to be hopeless. That it would be exceptionally difficult there could be no doubt, but that was the *raison d'être* of the expedition. There was, however, one portion clearly impossible. That was immediately below the apex of the gable. Here, in the centre of the great cliff, and measuring perhaps a fifth of its height, a huge mass of rock shoots up so steeply from the precipitous face that it appears to protrude. It is shaped something like an ace of diamonds, with the upper point somewhat blunted. It will be understood that along the lines of inclination springing up on either side, from its lowest point where the mass joined the main cliff, there was likely to be a fissure or groove, or some line of weaker resistance by which the summit ridge might be attained at no great distance below the actual top. Moreover, a little to the right (true left) of the great bulge was a fine couloir which ought to be negotiable. All these features had been noted from above and below. The face looked not impossible. It was probably more possible than it looked, and if any party could carry the position, it was that of the storm-troops advancing to the assault. These were Messrs. Young and Ryan, with Josef and Franz Lochmatter and Joseph Knubel.

Writes Mr. Young : " The War years have produced one slight, perhaps temporary change. In difficult or dangerous

undertakings men of action have always had to take nerves—their own or their company's—very thoroughly into consideration ; but it was thought indelicate to allude to them publicly, in forecast or in reminiscence. It is now conceded that they may form a necessary part of the natural of a man, not inconsistent with manliness or even with heroism. The story, therefore, of the Täschhorn climb can now be told with less likelihood of seeming to do injustice to the endurance and gallantry of our company of the day. For one reason especially I am glad of the new licence. Franz Lochmatter's mountaineering feat was the greatest I have ever witnessed, and after a number of years I can still say the greatest I can imagine. It is right that it should be recorded, for I do not suppose that in its mastery of natural difficulty, in its resistance to the effects of cold and fatigue, and to the infection of depression and fear, it has often been equalled on any field of adventure or conflict."

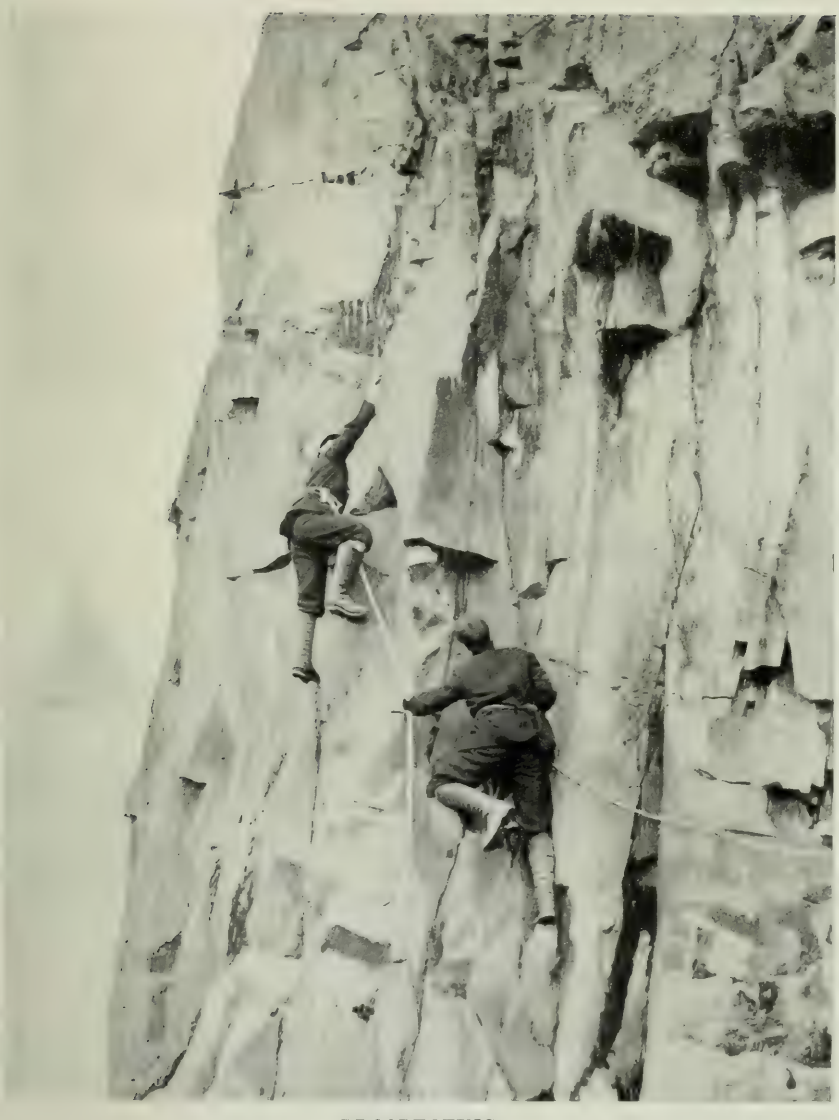
In attacking a climb of such severity there was no hunting about for sporting routes. The line of least resistance was selected and followed. The face itself was out of the question, so a mighty buttress, leaning at an angle less ferocious, was the decision. True it was that about half-way up the precipice it petered out into the general frontage, but it was not unreasonable to anticipate that the difficulties higher up would at least be no greater than those at the start.

They climbed in two parties, an arrangement which, as explained elsewhere, makes for speed, but which in this case, Mr. Young thinks, and with justice, was a mistake. True it is that, had it been otherwise, it is probable Lochmatter's extraordinary feat would not have had to be recorded, but, on the other hand——

The ropes were made up as follows : (1) Josef Lochmatter,

Ryan, Franz Lochmatter ; (2) Young, Joseph Knubel. Before very long it became evident that they were climbing against the tilt of the mountain. The disadvantages of this process have been explained elsewhere. On the Täschhorn they were emphasized. The relative value of handholds may be roughly indicated as the difference between holding on by an iron saucer face uppermost or face down. The one advantage of such a formation is that there is not much danger from loose stones. They won't stay on such ledges. Neither, for that matter, will human beings, which somewhat discounts the immunity from that special branch of danger. Moreover, it was inevitable that on such a formation overhangs should be frequent. By an overhang is not meant necessarily a projection that sticks out over one's head like the roof of a veranda or even the lintel of a door. It is pretty difficult to stand upright on a mantelpiece with one's face to the wall. If one has any waistband development, it is extremely difficult. If the wall leans out at ever so slight an angle, say an inch in 6 feet, it is at least next door to impossible. If the mantelpiece at the same time slopes ever so slightly under one's feet, rejection is just as emphatic and final as if one were up against the inside of a mansard roof. It is exceedingly hard to get up a cliff on which such formations are frequent. It is very much harder to get down.

Not one of the party required instruction in such matters. That they recognized the difficulties and perils of the situation there can be no doubt. There can be little doubt, too, that had they been all on one rope they would have consulted and turned back before being hopelessly committed to the ascent. As it was, they were in two parties—the second led by an amateur, the first urged on by the glowing Ryan. The feelings of both are easily comprehensible. The second " rope " knew



PROSPECTING.
(*Photo, G. P. Abraham.*)

that the rocks in front were feasible, because they had just been climbed; the Lochmatters were hardly likely to suggest turning back when a party led by an amateur was following up unassisted. It was not a spirit of rivalry; it was the "so long as those fellows carry on, I'm not going to chuck it" feeling, which has so often carried men on to attainment.

After a long time it was suggested that they should join up on one rope, and it was then that the desperate nature of the situation began to drive itself home. A little later Young asked Franz Lochmatter, half jestingly, for help, and Lochmatter replied that he must shift for himself, as they could not help each other.

That was the situation—five men roped together on that fearsome face, with stances so insecure that the slip of one would endanger the whole party. The usual safeguards of belays, threading the rope, and so forth were wanting. In fact, they only met three really sound hitches all the way up. The explanation is the tilt of the rocks. If you fasten a hat-peg on a door right side up, you can hang your hat on it. If you fasten it wrong way about, with the point down, you cannot. Such spikes of rock as could be found were wrong way about. It was not long after roping together—long, that is, relatively to the time occupied by the climb—that it seems clear that the guides made a mistake which might have proved fatal. In the account of the ascent of the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon, it will be noted that it was by Mr. Young's judgment that the guides were deflected from following an impracticable route to the new and successful line. The party had by now arrived within the gable of the Täschhorn face. Towards the Dôm the slant is steep enough. On the opposite side, that to the right of and nearest to the climbers, it falls with extraordinary steepness. Mr. Young recognized that the

party were one and all in extreme peril, that the business was now not to achieve their original purpose—the direct ascent—but to get off the face and on to the safety of the main mountain as expeditiously as possible—that is, to break away to the right. The guides would have none of it.

On the first ascent of a difficult rock-face the climber has to do as the rock-face tells him. Variants come with familiarity. One may have studied the field of campaign from afar with glasses, noted its details, and so forth ; but when one's nose is plastered flat against such detail, and all one's energies are concentrated on not quitting it with expedition, those particulars so carefully studied through glasses are not longer recognizable. That chimney which was to connect with a promising series of slabs, which were to lead to this, that, and the other, may be 100 feet below on the left, or 400 feet above on the right, or 10 feet round the corner. It is of no possible use to the man whose vision is limited to a few square feet of irresponsive rock. The party had to do what it was told, and the mountain's orders were to crawl along a succession of sloping ledges, almost holdless, with the rock above trying to push them off all the time. Exactly where they were going of course they could not tell, but they were moving upwards and, somehow, also in the direction of the great couloir.

It is probable that this couloir had been regarded as a sure and certain road of salvation, in preference for which all speculative digressions had to be set aside. In actuality salvation was scarcely the promise it blazoned. There was, in fact, no symptom of blazon anywhere. It was cold as death, and cruel as the grave. Its ascent was manifestly impracticable. Retreat was unthinkable. The only possible escape was by traversing the couloir, and it was obvious that the traverse would not go.

Then it was that Franz Lochmatter came to the front with the might and energy of a giant, and somehow the traverse went and the party found themselves safe on the other side—safe, that is, for the moment, but otherwise not one fraction better off than they were before.

So the weary grind went on, each man corkscrewing up interminable ledges, always on the edge of nothing at all but the next world, a danger to himself and everybody else the greater part of the time, until they landed out fairly below the great diamond-shaped bulge of rock—the one part they had one and all agreed in pronouncing impossible. As for the avenues of safety on one side or the other, they were somewhere else. Anyway they were not there or thereabouts. A mountain face is an unconscionably big thing. Then it came on to snow. That is the kind of thing it does in such circumstances.

The party were, in fact, pounded on that enormous precipice. They could escape neither up nor down, neither to one side nor the other. It was mate—one might almost write, sensationally, death-mate—for the penalty for 999,999 men out of every million and more who found themselves in such a situation would have been death ; but then, on the other hand, men who get themselves into such situations are men not easily killed.

As to the mere local staging of the drama, one must not be misled by the stupendous grandeur of the surroundings. Strong parties can get cragfast in England and even in Wales. Only the other day quite a strong party of Alpinists got properly stuck on a little British hill they had affected to despise, with the result that a lot of climbers had to quit their comfortable quarters on a winter night and haul them up to safety with ropes from above. On another occasion

a party was compelled to spend New Year's eve and morning a few hundred feet up a rock face not more than 30 feet from a safe way off. They did not venture to attempt to return as they had come, because a fall of a few hundred feet will do one's business as thoroughly as one of a few thousand, though of course one misses a lot of fine scenery on the way down. There were other factors in being on the Täschhorn. The men had been climbing for hours under the most muscle-trying, blood-chilling, nerve-racking conditions, and during all those hours they had fasted. This gives some idea of the nature of the ascent. Not one spot had been reached where they could get together for a meal. They had been compelled to fast, and that, too, in circumstances in which the regular stoking of the human machine is specially needed. Anxiety must have been giving way to something akin to despair, and despair must have been becoming tinged with fear ; and now, some 12,000 or 13,000 feet up on a sheer face, with a snowstorm coming on, they had reached the end of all things.

The position seems to have been something on these lines. In front of and above them was an ideal overhang that really was undercut at the bottom. It was shaped something like half a gigantic crab-shell stuck up on end, with the narrow part uppermost. True it was not so smooth as a crab-shell—it was of good rough rock ; but, on the other hand, it was thoroughly well iced. It appears to have been formed by a similar mass of rock, set at a similar angle, having slid away from below it. This gives some conception of the kind of place on which the party had foregathered, and where they had to stay—or rather cling.

The one and only way of escape lay along the line where the shell fitted, or rather did not quite fit, on to the parent cliff.

Here it was at least probable that some jointings might be found which might afford finger-tip holds. It was, moreover, quite likely that something like a reasonable stance would occur somewhere near the blunt tip of the convexity.

It was no easy matter to reach even the commencement of the potential crack, but Franz Lochmatter took the lead, and soon disappeared from sight over the edge. He was in desperate stress, but at least he was in action. Our sympathies are rather with those who had to "stand and wait." It must have been a dreadful experience, clinging there through dragging minute after dragging minute, with the snow settling on their rigid forms and the chill of the iced mountain eating into blood and bone, expectant of the grating sound of a slip precedent to the fall which would engrave *Lasciate ogni speranza* * on the mountain side, waiting till the numbed fingers should relax their grip and the end come. Mr. Young probably had the worst time of all. He was on the farthest out of the party, and alone of them heard the scraping when Lochmatter actually did slip, alone saw his boots shoot out into space ere he checked the fall in some marvellous manner. Young was not roped to the leader, it is true, but that would have made no difference. Had Lochmatter come off, he would have swung round across and below him, and the rope would have flicked him off the face like a bread-crumb.

Lochmatter's experiences must have been realized, in a degree at least, by every leader who finds himself nearing the end of his strength before he is nearing the end of a long pitch. There is the sudden slip, or at least failure of precision, which indicates failing power. The no less sudden recovery by some inexplicable effort. The extraordinary recuperation which, at least temporarily, succeeds, and then the return, with increasing

* "All hope abandon." Dante, *Inferno*, canto iii. 9.

insistence, of the lack of vigour ; its renewal from some unknown sources—nerve, will-power, or quite probably downright funk, though no one ever admits it ; and then attainment, and thereupon straightway the anguish is forgotten. Only in Lochmatter's case there was no forgetting of the anguish.

There is something magnificent in the self-confidence of his suggestion that he should go ahead by himself and return with a rescue party. It also illuminates with the relentless crudity of a lightning flash the terrific severity of the passage he had so hardly won and of the prospect ahead. It also typifies his exhaustion, else would he have realized before the words shaped themselves that the proposal was impracticable. Long before he could have returned—some fifteen hours at Mr. Young's estimate—every one of the party would have dropped off from exhaustion, or have been frozen stark where they had contrived to belay themselves. Safety lay in action only. Josef Lochmatter followed his brother, and arrived somehow.

Meanwhile Ryan and Young calmly discussed the odds against their coming out alive, and Joseph Knubel kept his place with uncomplaining fortitude—" Gentlemen unafraid," every one of the five.

Then the rope came down for Ryan. He was a featherweight whom the brothers above, insecurely placed as they were, could handle. For Ryan, after all those hours of exhaustion, the strain was too much. A few feet and he was dangling helpless on the rope, to be lifted inch by inch over the edge of the overhang.

Then came Young's turn. He was not a heavyweight exactly, but far heavier than Ryan. The guides were good to hold, but not to lift. Accordingly he set out on Franz Lochmatter's line.

It seems not impossible here that the Lochmatters underestimated Young's skill and endurance. It is as well to understand the position exactly. The guides were fixed on the blunt top of the convexity. Young had to climb up to the outermost part of its lower edge and then work along its recurving side. The rope therefore came down to him diagonally. Now, even when the rocks are warm and dry, and the results of a slip negligible except as regards some slight personal discomfort and serious damage to self-esteem, nothing is more disturbing to physical and mental equilibrium than anything but the most absolute, absolute moral help from a slanting rope. The slightest physical aid may result in a complete loss of holds, and an even more complete loss of temper. Whether the guides gave an unwelcome tug, whether the rope hitched on a projection, or whether its drag proved too much for him, Young came off.

He was not surprised; he was not flustered. There is something almost cold-blooded, contradictory though it sound, in the energy and address with which he readjusted the situation. Scarcely less remarkable are the guides' swift appreciation and response. As he came away from his holds, he kicked off violently with his feet so as to swing clear of the overhang and give the guides a foot or two of loose rope, unhindered by friction, to pull in. The Lochmatters responded like machines. Again was the process repeated from the end of the swing, and again a foot or so was achieved. At last Young came up to the overhang, and further pendulum practice was out of the question. He therefore butted himself away with feet, ice-axe, and everything else at his command, to be landed sprawling on the rock instead of swinging underneath it. By this time hands and fingers were completely played out, but he managed to get a good hold on a projection of rock with

his teeth which, with the aid of the rope, kept him *in situ* till strength returned.

He had not long to wait. There seems to have been no killing these men. Ryan, up above, was quite chirpy. Young, as soon as he was fairly fit again, stood up on that horrid, icy slope, untied the half-frozen rope from round his waist, and threw it down to Knubel. He had to make a couple of casts too. This sounds incredible, but it is what happened. Then Knubel, laden with two rucksacks and sundry ice-axes, the Lochmatters this time confining themselves to strictly moral support with the rope, came up the same way that Franz Lochmatter did. This little episode makes one think whether it is not just possible that Knubel, unencumbered, might have led. There is no shadow of suggestion of disparagement of Franz Lochmatter's marvellous exploit here, but then Joseph Knubel was a marvel too.

There is little left to tell. The party moved upward and upward, painful foot by foot, almost inch by inch, with little care for anything except that they were moving upward. At length, to Mr. Young's wearied eyes appeared through the dusk the inexplicable phenomenon of two men moving together. Then came a question whether he would like a pull with the rope, the first time for many hours when any one of the party had been in a position to proffer such aid. Yes, he would. In a few minutes victory had been achieved—and safety. It is doubtful whether any of the party thought much about the victory at that time, or afterwards for that matter.

CORSICA

"BEAR well in mind that the difficulties of the climb are really serious. The Z'mutt ridge is but a bagatelle in comparison with Paglia Orba's east wall; Monte Rosa from Macugnaga is longer, but throughout easier; even on the Grépon, with perhaps the exception of the but twice-climbed Venetz-Burgener crack, have I failed to find anything worthy of comparison with some of the many tight corners we struggled with on Paglia Orba. Also the great lack of belays makes a high level of steadiness in the whole party essential."

"Really serious!" If the difficulties be as serious as indicated in the foregoing warning—for warning it is—and there is no reason to doubt that they are, they must be exceptionally severe. If, for example, it were stated that some well-known English climb—*e.g.* the face of Scafell Pinnacle—were more difficult than any portion of the Z'mutt ascent, the proposition would probably be accepted without comment. Scafell Pinnacle, under conditions obtaining at from 10,000 to 14,000 feet above sea-level, would most likely be impracticable, and, *per contra*, most of the Z'mutt *arête* route, at only 2,000 odd feet up, would probably go like smoke.

Under consideration, however, we have an ascent which is characterized as very much more difficult than a very difficult route on a difficult mountain—the Z'mutt *arête* on the Matterhorn—at least rivalling a long and exacting climb up the great

snow mass of Monte Rosa, and emphasized by more than one passage of greater severity than the noted Mummery crack on the Grépon, pinnacled "in the intense inane" above the glaciers of Mont Blanc : such an ascent as one would naturally expect to find amongst the mighty mountain ranges of the world. It is something of an anti-climax to learn that it is on an insignificant peak, less than 9,000 feet high, on an insignificant island in the Mediterranean—Corsica.

Corsica has been very badly treated in the matter of mountains. There is very little doubt that it has missed immortality amongst the glorious company of poets, soaring "in the high reason of their fancies with their garlands and singing robes about them," simply because it did not scan conveniently :

> "From sea-girt Populonia,
> Whose sentinels descry
> Sardinia's snowy mountain tops
> Fringing the western sky."

Now as Sardinia's mountains are only about half the height of those of Corsica, and not so well in the line of sight from Populonia, it is pardonable to suggest that Macaulay, in the high reason of his fancy, quietly shifted the islands to suit his metre.

Again, even that important publication, *The Times Encyclopædia*, casts a veil of deception over the Corsican highlands. It writes of "forest-clad mountains." It should have written "forest-kilted."

Corsica, moreover, till recently offered no special attractions for tourists. It was a home of bad men. It was the birthplace of one of the very worst men who ever lived, the evil heritage of whose lust of conquest is with us yet. Jena was repaid in full at Sedan, it is traditionally believed, in fulfilment of a Hannibal-like oath to which William I. of

Germany and Prussia was sworn in his infancy, but the seed of the first unhallowed sowing is fresh and vigorous and detestable as ever. True to its origin, it has generated a sort of national vendetta.

Corsica is the home of the vendetta, not its cradle. The vendetta has existed from times unknown. In the Old Testament, in anticipation of Bacon's aphorism, it was recognized as a kind of wild justice. It was quite in order for the avenger of blood to kill his bird if he could catch him outside a city of refuge. Moreover, it established a kind of feudal system. The headman, say, of the Hilonites was bound to defend the cause of a minor Hilonite in the settlement of any little affair of this kind, conditionally on all the minor Hilonites supporting him when he had some really serious job on hand—such as the wiping out of another clan.

They managed things somewhat differently in Corsica. Here is an example. A pig ran into a man's garden. The owner of the garden quarrelled thereanent with the owner of the pig. The owner of the pig thereupon shot or stabbed to death the owner of the garden. The son of the owner of the garden thereupon slew, etc., the owner of the pig. The son of the owner of the pig thereupon slew, etc., the son of the owner of the garden, and so on. This feud had lasted some four hundred years up to the end of the nineteenth century, and maybe continues to this day—in ramifications, anyway. The relatives of the bereaved are far too good sportsmen not to take a hand in the fun and leave the adjustment of matters to the principals alone.

Another popular feature of the island is the *maquis*, which is merely the equivalent of "scrub," "bush," or "chapparal," wherein bad, wicked men lie up. They are not really bad, wicked men. They have merely fulfilled a traditional family

obligation, and the unreasoning inability of an unsympathetic police to distinguish between this and homicide has driven them to turn bandit—to the great inconvenience of those who wander unwarily on their lawful occasions.

Thus it will be realized that until quite, quite recently, and even later, touring in the hinterland of Corsica was likely to be quite exciting enough without the stimulant of mountaineering. True it is that some parties did go *mouflon* shooting, but such have guns and can shoot—climbers have not.

This *mouflon* (mountain sheep) shooting is about the only hint of the existence of really mountainous ground. Otherwise the elevations are popularly confined to rocky hills overlooking a sunny sea. These are invariably crowned by a castle overlooking the sunny sea, which castle invariably belongs to a Paoli. These premises conceded, it is somewhat startling to read that within the limited area of this insignificant island is a climb which will challenge for difficulty almost any ascent in the Alps.

Of the Z'mutt *arête* mention has been made in the chapter on the Matterhorn. It is the opinion of an expert that if it were more favourably situated in respect of sunshine, if there were a hut conveniently handy, if the difficulties of the most distinctive sections were modified by rope-ladders—in fact, if, to adapt the Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland*, the climb were otherwise or might have been before it was or is, it would not be appreciably harder than the ordinary route up the Italian side. All which signifies that it is about the most difficult route up the Matterhorn which has been climbed throughout, and indeed indicates that it has not been climbed—that the *arête* itself has not been followed throughout from start to finish. A stiff proposition indeed, but within the compass of a strong party given decent conditions.

The Venetz-Burgener crack is quite a different matter. It is not to be confused with the celebrated Mummery crack on the same aiguille. That is, perhaps, technically no harder than the famous Kern Knotts, on the Sty Head Pass, allowing for difference of altitude, some thousand feet. Both are severe, decidedly so—something of a feather in one's cap to have led, good man though one may be. Now it appears that on the east wall of the Paglia Orba either of these would have come as something of a relief as " really truly " pitches.

As a matter of fact Paglia Orba is not insignificant really. It is 8,284 feet high, and its shape is distinctive. Now distinction of outline very generally connotes difficulty of ascent. Moreover, the base of the Corsican mountains comes down fairly close to the sea-level, that of the Alps is at an altitude of something like that of Ben Nevis ; and the climbing section of a mountain is reckoned from the height of its summit above its base, not above sea-level. Of ordinary mountains, that is ; the 20,000 odd footers are in a different category. That Corsica lies in the sunny south where the blue Mediterranean lies, " lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams," does not count. The blue Mediterranean is a fraud, especially in winter, when one goes there for warmth and catches one's death of cold. Even as late as May the Corsican mountains are clad in snow from the waist up, Strephon-like fairies.

That Alfred Bryn and George and Maxwell Finch did not know what they were up against when they tackled the east wall of Paglia Orba may be taken as read. The enthusiastic climber may love " the bright eyes of danger " for themselves, but he is particularly careful not to forfeit a recurrence of the opportunity of so doing. Moreover, no one has yet successfully accomplished the ascent of a mountain by falling off it on the way up. Moreover, a mountaineering accident differs,

as indicated elsewhere, from other "field sports" accidents. One's body is not only the subject of an inquest, but one's *manes* are court-martialled, generally by an ignorant and prejudiced tribunal. The three had come to Corsica to enjoy themselves climbing, and being mountaineers of high order, the stiffer the proposition, within reason, the keener the enjoyment. They had taken in two brand new traverses which provided excellent sport, and then started looking around for something super—something which would really extend them. They got it.

The experience is not uncommon. A majestic, even terrible example is that of Young and Ryan's party on the Täschhorn. At the other end of the scale is the exasperation of a noted English climber who was brought up by a short stretch of smooth rock on which a lizard was running tauntingly about. The Corsican climb was betwixt and between, but on a grand scale nevertheless.

The mountain had been carefully reconnoitred, and the reason for the decision of an attack on the east face is amusingly recorded. "On the south-east face, which offers no absolutely black and perpendicular walls comparable to those of the impressive east face, we could see plenty of 'roads' leading to the summit. They threatened to be rather dull and uninteresting, so having a genuine horror of striking something easy . . ." And so on. Probably this is not intended to be humorous, but it is.

The route was worked out on the same principle as that on which a route up a hitherto unconquered Welsh precipice was traced, by connecting up in the mind's eye a series of snow patches by feasible pitches. The snow-patches were there all right, clearly visible. The connecting links were visible only to the eye of faith; but if they were not there they ought to

be, and no doubt were. This familiar process of reasoning is sometimes justified by the issue, sometimes it proves fallacious. In the present instance the links were " missing " just where most required. One of the main objections to difficulties of this character is that though it may be possible to get up them somehow, aided by the shoulder, head, or ice-axe of one's second, it is next door to impossible to come down, otherwise than involuntarily, unless there is some means of hitching or threading the rope. The absence of such facilities—belays—has been noted in the opening paragraph. These little items are only revealed by intimate acquaintance.

The wicked and deceitful mountain held out the right hand of fellowship at first, and away they rattled, unroped, go as you please, until the right hand of fellowship rapidly began to assume the shape and character of an aggressive clenched fist. At this the party put on the rope and went ahead again.

All went very well. They were by way of getting their money's worth. The climbing was continuously difficult, occasionally perhaps dangerous, generally uncomfortable. At length, something over 1,000 feet from their goal, the game became serious.

High above their heads was the summit. That it was probably unattainable by a straight up ascent had been recognized from the first. The scheme had been to follow the snow ledges in a semicircle—a C, Captain Finch happily terms it—to the left, ending up approximately above the starting-point. This was a sufficiently serious proposition in itself. It is not difficult to realize how hard it is for an individual, plastered like a starfish against a vertical wall, to hit off a semicircular tour with accuracy, even had the rocks obligingly offered facilities ; and the rocks were most disobliging.

This is anticipating. Before testing the possibilities of the

semicircular tour it was necessary to get to the foot of it, and for practical purposes the foot seemed as remote as the summit. They had, in fact, arrived at a point beyond which earlier climbers had pronounced progress impossible. This was the situation.

The only route up was by a fissure, technically a chimney, very difficult at the start and blocked at the exit by a great jammed stone, sheathed in ice. These chock-stones are quite bad enough to manage as a rule when warm and dry. *Outside* this chimney, and the face it cleft, and the climbers on the face a shower of water was falling. This shower was coming from the summit of Paglia Orba, far overhead. A little reflection will give some idea of the steepness of the course.

They achieved by a happy chance. They had given up, like wise men, and were actually going down again, when George Finch asked Bryn to take a photograph for him. Bryn, poking about for a suitable spot, hit off a way of circumventing the initial difficulties of the chimney, and muscle, skill, and determination completed its conquest.

So far the party had triumphed—and were in a far worse position than before. Whether they could have descended the chimney in safety is not known, because they did not try. They went on and came to another chimney more evil than the first. This also they mastered somehow, and their plight was now worse than ever. That they could have descended the last difficulty in safety is unthinkable, and they did not think of it. They went steadily on. The worst must have been past. As a matter of fact worse was to come, and then very much worse.

The " worse " was that at one point they could see their tracks in the snow below, but not the intervening cliff. The " very much worse " was just beyond, " a broad chimney, which

A STIFF CRACK.
(*Photo, G. P. Abraham.*)

PAGLIA ORBA.
(*Photo, F. S. Smythe.*)

was choked by what resembled a frozen waterfall crowned by a huge cornice." To add to the amenities of this chimney, it was filled with clustered icicles.

Bryn was leading. He was well and truly belayed to a good sound piece of rock—which soon after came away like a bit of toffee. Bryn meanwhile had gone on, and eventually reached " a comparatively firm position whence he was able to take in Maxwell's rope with his teeth and left hand."

" At last Bryn came to the end of his tether, though with still two metres separating him from the top of the waterfall and almost directly under the cornice. During a moment of intense danger both he and Maxwell climbed together. Then, just as Maxwell began to tackle the worst bit of all, Bryn reached the belay."

All danger was now over, and the summit was as good as won—as it was, in fact, a little later. The party foregathered above the cornice at the top of the chimney, something like a hundred feet above its base.

That hundred feet had taken over two hours.

THE BROUILLARD RIDGE

"SIGNOR CUMANI, an artist, attempted to ascend Mont Blanc alone, by way of the Brenva glacier, in September 1893. He has not been heard of since."—*Alpine Journal*, Vol. XVII., p. 43.

The Brenva route "is the most direct of all the routes up the mountain, but it is seldom taken on account of its steepness and difficulty."—*Chamonix and the Range of Mont Blanc*, E. Whymper, p. 156.

The significance of the above obituary notice, with its accompanying extract, is that Signor Cumani was either on suicide intent or was—foolhardy: a pleasing euphemism for a fool, and probably a conceited fool at that. This latter class still exists on the mountains. Casualties amongst such are not sufficiently frequent. They are a danger to themselves and to others, and a discredit to the sport.

A comparative study of the dictionary definition of the terms "Competition" and "Emulation" leaves one rather at sea as to whether the two words do not mean one and the same thing. Fortunately there exist people who understand their own language without the aid of a dictionary, and can define and distinguish for themselves. The spirit of emulation in mountaineering is honourable and inspiring. The spirit of competition is detestable and dangerous. It is undoubtedly most gratifying to accomplish the first ascent of a difficult peak,

but the satisfaction is, or should be, the satisfaction of achievement purely.

"A book was writ of late call'd" (being translated) *The Blue Ribbon of the Alps*, which presumably does "but prompt the age to quit their clogs." The conception, however, of this volume seems to be that the Alps constitute an arena wherein mountaineers of various nationalities do, or should, meet and contend for supremacy—a contest annually to be renewed, and one which, with each success, must become more exacting. Thus, if during the present season, or the next, or the next, a party, say, of Italians, should succeed in ascending a peak or peaks, a pinnacle or pinnacles, by a route or routes hitherto regarded as impossible, the élite of the mountaineers of Britain, Germany, France, Japan, Austria, etc., should, during the succeeding seasons, concentrate on enrolling on the list of climbable ascents by their own proper endeavour sundry peaks, pinnacles, etc., even more impossible, or on like achievements. If this really be the purport of this volume—and it is difficult to interpret it otherwise—no more pernicious mountaineering publication was ever issued. Mountaineers love the wine of success, but

> "Who loves that must first be wise and good.
> But from the mark how far they rove we see,
> For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood."

The proposition is not only mischievous, but imbecile. It cannot support itself; it cannot be propped up into even tolerable uprightness by argument. The condition of the great peaks may change—and change extravagantly from season to season, even from month to month, and in a lesser degree from week to week, from day to day, and even hour to hour. A comparative estimate is therefore impossible and,

what is more, irritating, excessively foolish, besides being vulgar and out of consonance with the spirit of the sport. It is right and honourable to take a patriotic pride in the exploits of one's fellow-countrymen; but it is neither honourable nor moral to blazon such exploits as a challenge to climbers of other nationalities—unless, of course, one can arrange that the mountain, the snow, the weather, and so forth shall be in exactly the same condition as on the former occasion.

It would appear that in the year of grace 1911 this Blue Ribbon was placed, all unknown to them, on the brows or breasts, or possibly boots, of Messrs. G. W. Young and H. O. Jones. They did not dream of such things as Blue Ribbons, or fame, or blazes of glory. They were merely out to revel to the full in the enjoyment of first-class skill, first-class condition of mind and body, and unimaginably first-class condition of mountain. It is also satisfactory to record that on the most brilliant, if not the most strenuous, of these expeditions the decoration was tarnished by the inclusion of a foreigner, an Austrian doctor, one Karl Blodig, than whose name few are more honourable on the scroll of mountaineers—a right glorious blemish.

Dr. Karl Blodig was the high priest of that much-derided sport of peak-bagging. There is a well-known English climbing club which held up as a desirable objective for its members the bagging of all the distinct elevations of over 2,500 feet in England. The proposal was received with acclamation, and its significance realized with mixed feelings. It is, frankly, an awful fag. Points above this once desired, but ere long wholly undesirable, altitude crop in places most unlikely and of incredible remoteness. No less incredible is their number. Dr. Blodig was out to bag peaks also, less in number, it is true, but somewhat greater in height—all the Alpine peaks, in fact,

over 4,000 metres. Four thousand metres equal 13,123.60 feet. He must have been bone-weary. One can conceive his relief on finding that a doubtful point was only 13,123 feet, and that he could cut out the decimal and save the ascent. It is quite possible, however, in view of the perversity of mountaineering nature, that he was exasperated to find a peak just .60 too low, and that he had not got to climb it. There are, or were, sixty-seven such summits, unless some perfidious surveyor has picked out some more, starting from Mont Blanc and running down to the Aiguille de Rochefort, which probably represents the nadir of the scale.

Sixty-five of these Dr. Blodig had in his pocket, and was resting content on his laurels at the green age of fifty odd when unkind research unearthed, or rather unskyed, two points above the basic altitude—the Punta Margherita on the Grandes Jorasses, and the Pic Luigi Amadeo on the Brouillard ridge of Mont Blanc. More unkindly still, a rival had followed worthily in his steps, bagged all the sixty-five 4,000-metre points, pocketed them, and, worst of all, captured the Punta Margherita. The state of the game, then, for Dr. Blodig was one down and two to play. There was also another eminent mountaineer, not British, in the running, all out for the Pic Luigi Amadeo.

Young and Jones were first-class sportsmen, which is very good, and chivalrous gentlemen, which, connoting the former quality, is even better. They put Dr. Blodig in the way of roping in, quite literally, the Punta Margherita, and so getting all square. That was not all they did.

This is the situation.

To the summit of the much-besieged Monarch of Mountains there remained as a constant challenge one apparent and most attractive route which ought to have been practicable but

for one objection—it was suicidal. The margin of safety was indefinable, because, normally, it was not there. The chief obstacle was a miserable two or three hundred feet of rock, steep truly, but appreciably less so than many familiar, frequented precipices. The obvious line of ascent was by an ice-filled fissure which approximated to the vertical. Approximation to the vertical signifies a " perpendicular " wall set at an angle of somewhere between 60° and 80°. The assumption that skill, resolution, strength, and endurance could not force a way up was unthinkable, but the face remained a tantalizing, defiant, unconquerable fact. The Péteret approach, indefinitely longer, had been vanquished—after some six hours' step-cutting indeed, but it had been vanquished. The Brouillard Ridge would no doubt also have fallen to the prowess of man, but for one factor—time.

On the ridge, about 1,000 feet above the commencement of the impasse, was the last of the coveted 4,000 meterers, the Pic Luigi Amadeo.

It had already fallen. It had been turned by a flanking movement of unspeakable toil and taken in reverse. It was therefore practicable. Dr. Blodig's object was first to reach the summit of the Pic; and, second—a very good second—to reach it before any other competitor in the 4,000 Metre Stakes. Whether the position was captured by flanking movement, taken in reverse, or stormed by frontal attack was to him a matter of small, relatively small, importance. He would much have preferred a frontal attack, no doubt, but that had been pronounced impossible.

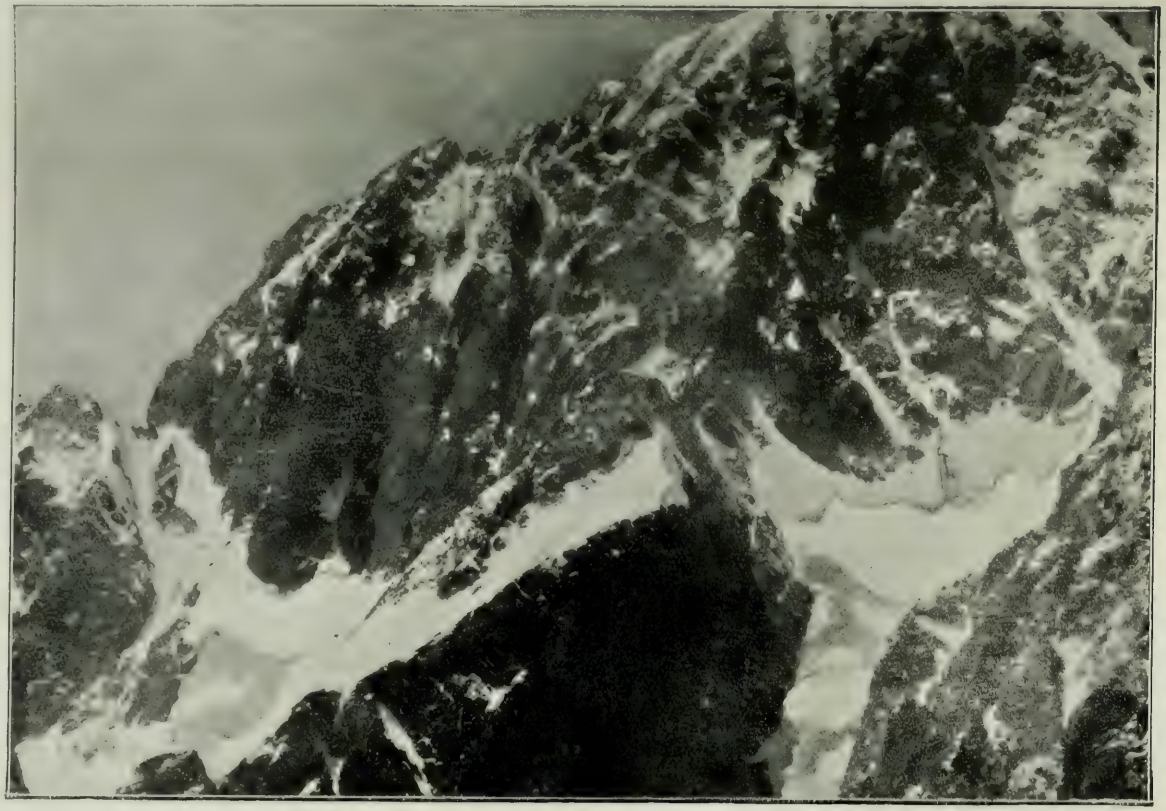
Young and Jones cared not one straw whether the Pic Luigi Amadeo measured 3,800, 3,900, 4,000, or 4,010 metres. They probably cared very little whether the Pic Luigi Amadeo, an excrescence on the great Brouillard Ridge, existed. Their

object was to storm the unconquered buttress of the ridge by direct frontal attack. Hitherto vain, such assault might, under existing conditions, be warrantable. Nevertheless the essay demanded perfect condition, admirable skill, unimpeachable nerve, and faultless timing. In the event of a miscalculation in any of these conditions the forfeit was—final. The outcome of this last great argument was an expedition which, for considered strategy, nice calculation, and cool, headlong daring, backed by skill and self-reliance, is quite possibly unsurpassed in the annals of mountaineering. This is a hard saying. The intended emphasis, crossed, dotted, and underlined, is the entire absence of "stunt" from both scheme and performance. There was no picking a difficult route just because it was difficult, when an easier option offered. No easier option offered. Nevertheless Dr. Blodig attained his last and most desired peak in the most desirable possible way, and Young and Jones won the laurel crown of victory, unfilleted by Blue Ribbon.

Now to try and get an idea of the ground. To seek a comparison amongst our small British hills! Many people have seen, if they have not noted, the southern front of Saddleback, the fell overlooking Threlkeld station, on the line from Penrith to Keswick in the Lake District. The face of the mountain is riven into vast cloughs, divided by lateral ridges, broad and bluff at the base, but narrowing as they approach the summit into edges flanked by slopes of great steepness. On the Courmayeur front of Mont Blanc these subsidiary fells would be excrescences, and the intervening hollows minor indentations. Still it does not require an exaggeration of imagination to trace a resemblance between the Brouillard Ridge and Gate Gill Fell (the westernmost) as regards general outline. The distinction in scale is another matter.

Take the English buttress. Fill the clough to the east two-thirds deep in ice, rearing it up at an impossible angle towards the summit-line, an angle made still more impossible by hideous ice-falls and *séracs*. Garnish the ridge to the east with a few excrescences of a bulk to dwarf the fell itself—to wit, the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret with its attendant satellites, the Aiguille Noire, Les Dames Anglaises, and so forth, aligned on a descending scale. Here we have the Brouillard Glacier, which finishes up somewhere to the east of the summit. Fill in, after like manner but in less ferocious style, the corresponding depression to the west, and we have the Miage Glacier, set at a less formidable angle but ending goodness—or its antithesis—knows where. Now if the buttress and the continuing ridge are well snowed and iced—and they can be—we have a tolerable delineation of the Brouillard Ridge, with its attendant glaciers in imagination. The illustration may not be a good one, but it is not so bad. From a cat it is not difficult to conceive a tiger, albeit the paw of the tiger would obliterate the cat. It is the scale, not the outline, that counts.

To pursue the puny illustration. Just beyond where the pyramidal base of Gate Gill Fell sets back towards the parent mountain there is a slight depression, beyond which the ground rises with very mild abruptness, emphasized by very mild crags—Knott Alley. Just beyond where the great outstanding Brouillard Buttress—the paw, as Mr. Young happily terms it—sets back towards the parent mountain, there is a sharp depression, beyond which the crags rise with intolerable steepness. Where there are such nicks on mountain ridges, followed by a rise in the ground beyond, there is almost always a couloir, gully, shute, or gutter on either side. To cross the depression on the Cumberland fell from one flanking gill



THE BROUILLARD RIDGE AND PIC LUIGI AMADEO.

(*Photo, P. Wyn Harris. By permission of the President, Cambridge Mountaineering Club.*)

to another in summer would be a grind ; in winter, with the ground hard frozen, for an ordinary pedestrian serious work. On the Brouillard Ridge it represents the Col Émile Rey, a first-class mountaineering expedition. Again, from the inn at the foot of Saddleback an hour's walking should take one to the more remote starting-point for the nick. From Courmayeur to the Quintino hut ten hours is quite good time. Hours perhaps convey a better idea of scale than feet.

The explanation of the " more remote " starting-point and the circuitous route thereby implied, is that the " paw " of the Brouillard Ridge is a considerable mountain, and that the ascent of one of its peaks is not a trifle to be taken in one's stride en route for the summit of Mont Blanc. Also the Col Émile Rey is, from the Courmayeur side, a route to be avoided.

The party was a notable one—G. W. Young, H. O. Jones, Dr. Karl Blodig, and that great little guide, Joseph Knubel. At first the prospect of achievement seemed remote. The passage from the Quintino hut to the foot of the col and thence to its apex is not to be accomplished by the aid of a farthing dip in the small hours. A full moon was deemed essential to success, and the party had awaited one with as much anxiety as Spartans, Zulus, and such like uncivilized fighting folk before going into action. The full moon came, and with it, circumambient to the Quintino hut, a mist. It looked as if the mountain were going to add to its long list of victories. Had the men lost heart, it would have done so, but they were not of that mettle. They spent the misty hours in working out a track from the hut, cutting steps, route marking, and so forth. This is an occupation which makes a whisper as to the dignity of drudgery exceedingly dangerous to the whisperer, but it kept them busy—too busy to worry.

They were rewarded. The next night the moon did shine as

bright as day, and the climbers came out too at speed as express as was consistent with safety. The ascent of the col is not child's sport. It was filled with hard snow, and the average angle was found to be 47°, steepening in parts to 55° and even more. A slip on this inclination means a rapid return to the starting-point and as far beyond as one goes till one stops. It is usual to rope up in such places and cut steps. The party did not rope up. They did not even cut steps except where they had to. Otherwise they would probably have failed of success. For the most part they strode along on crampons, some of ten prongs, some of eight. Both are unspeakable contrivances, but useful withal. Probably the ten-prongers excel in both respects.

The party was chased up the col by the fiend of darkness—

> "Like one that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> . . . . .
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread."

The moving moon, as in *The Ancient Mariner*, nowhere did abide, and the lower it sank the higher the shadow climbed, and light was essential to speed, and speed essential to success. Just towards the end darkness put on a spurt and got home first. Fortunately this happened close to the finish, but the party had to climb the stiffest part of the col by starlight till they reached the summit and safety.

Col is generally translated "pass." It is a misleading translation. Pass, to the average Englishman, signifies an elevated road frequented by motors and so forth ; or, should it be merely a path, by sheep and tourists. A pass or col above the snow-line is a recessed depression between any two

summits. Much skill, care, and labour is required to attain the summit of the Col Émile Rey, and at least an equal amount of care to prevent arriving at the foot on the far side with undesirable momentum. This particular col is a pass of high order—and the work of the day was only beginning. Literally of the day. They had to wait for dawn before the grand assault on the crux of the climb could be attempted.

> "Morn,
> Waked by the circling hours, with rosy hand
> Unbarred the gates of light."

The party on the col had now the most critical part of their task before them. They had turned one great mountain, they had scaled a difficult acclivity, they were at the foot of another great peak, the Luigi Amadeo, and beyond were Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, the snow-cap of Mont Blanc itself—and the night. They had elected to walk

> "With Death and Morning on the silver horns,"

but had no intention of remaining in that somewhat unstable company a moment longer than necessary. With the first grey herald of the dawn they were up and away to chase the glowing hours with flying feet—and keep ahead of them, which sounds contradictory, but remains a fact. The crux, the chief obstacle, was the rampart at the foot of the Pic Luigi Amadeo, the miserable two or three hundred feet of rock.

No doubt this rampart could have been carried by escalade, given time. Time, however, was not available. To the ear of the mountaineer the term "everlasting hills" is a misplaced sarcasm. Exposed as they are to the most violent assaults of wind and rain, ice, snow and frost, the great peaks are incessantly crumbling away. In the winter they are

tolerably immune under a comfortable covering of snow. With the spring begins the work of destruction, first in great snow avalanches, which give a preliminary surface cleaning, and then constant erosion, the melting of snow by day, the freezing of the moisture by night, the gnawing of the ice so formed into the surface, biting out small pieces from the live mountain, widening cracks, undermining towers, yet holding all in a death-grip till the sun comes and loosens the holds into water, and then down rush the victims in single stones, stone-falls, and rock-avalanches.

It is a horrid thing to be caught by a stone-fall. One feels so helpless with a cascade of road metal, kerb-stones, and an occasional taxi rattling all over, above, and round you. If you are not hit, you experience a fervent feeling of thankfulness, which you may fervidly express without fear. If you are peppered, you may say exactly what you want to say, even if a bishop be next to you on the rope.

Now the slope of the Pic Luigi Amadeo was littered with artillery of the description scheduled above. To remain on the col in broad day would have been fraught with danger ; to advance to the assault in broad day, certain death. Falling stones select the line of least resistance for descent ; climbers on faces of great severity the line of least resistance for ascent. A collision, therefore, when falling stones are active, is almost inevitable—and the falling stones are not the injured party.

The line of least resistance for both was a deep fissure in the face, just a little to one side of the ridge.

Now normally this fissure was filled with ice ; so full and so steep was it that its practicability in any case was doubtful, its possibility within a safe time impossible. It was at this point all previous assaults had been turned. That particular season, however, was abnormal. The sun got to work in the

spring, and never slackened all the summer through. Ice-filled gullies became first torrents, then dry ravines. It was on this calculation that the assault had been planned, and daring was justified of her children. The gully was incredibly free from snow and ice. Still, the party had no assurance that it would go. The technical difficulties might defeat them yet.

They roped up and went at it at the earliest possible minute, and stormed triumphantly to its exit. Mr. Young states that the abhorrent gully was not really difficult, but a hint here and there suggests that Mr. Young's conception of difficulty may differ from that of less gifted folk. One thing is certain: the whole place was tumbling to pieces with rottenness, and none but experienced mountaineers could have achieved it in safety. There are many brilliant cragsmen in England, but a good cragsman is not necessarily a good mountaineer. Plant such an one down on rotten rock, and he may be found not only unhappy himself but a cause that unhappiness is in others. That there should have been no minor casualties in the shape of contusions, etc., especially in view of the hurrying upwards with impetuous speed necessitated by the savage demand of time, is unthinkable, especially amongst the rearguard. Mr. Young indeed hints as much, but there was "Nothing to report."

The impregnable defence had been carried with a rush, but there remained abundant opportunities of being knocked on the head or off one's perch. The Col Émile Rey was somewhere about 11,000 feet high, the impregnable obstacle about 300 feet, and the Pic Luigi Amadeo, whose barbican only had been stormed, 13,000 feet odd. There were therefore some 2,000 feet to go before the flag could be victoriously planted on the keep, open fields of fire and constricted ranges

for mountain artillery waiting to be loosed off at the command of the swift-coming sun. The fierce pace had to be maintained with death as the pace-maker.

This last phrase is only partially true. Young and Jones, elated with conquest, were in rollicking holiday mood, and would not have slacked one whit had they been clad in some fairy armour of insurance against slip or stone, whereof proof may hereinafter be found. Dr. Blodig, however, was by no means in his first youth. The approach had been strenuous, the first burst of speed terrific. There was no saying whether or when reaction might come. It was therefore sound mountaineering to hustle him over the danger zone, with the fire of achievement still coursing through his veins, before he cracked.

The good doctor, however, showed no intention of cracking. He grumbled a little, it is true, but he kept up his end gamely. The whole party romped joyously up the mountain, and at eight o'clock stood aside to let the veteran mountaineer be the first to set foot on the summit blocks of the Pic Luigi Amadeo.

There he showed the true Blue Ribbon spirit. He gave three cheers for the English Climbers' Club, two of whose members had brutally dragged him up a gully, pounded him with its stray material, and hustled him with wholly unnecessary speed (as it turned out) up the crags beyond. Loose stones! Not a single stone had so much as sat up to say good-morning, so far in advance of the scheduled time had that tempestuous rush taken the party.

He might well be elate. He had not only achieved what had been pronounced impossible, but he had triumphed finally and completely. His rivals might equal him, but he was the first to accomplish the known 4,000-metre list, and

must ever so remain. As a matter of fact, he had beaten them in more ways than one. Such had been the pace set that he reached the actual summit of Mont Blanc at half-past twelve. Two days later, under like conditions, one of his younger rivals followed in the steps the pioneers had shown practicable, but did not reach the top till five; and the next week another competitor came along, but did not attain until half-past six. Both had to pass the night at the Vallot hut, yet both were performances of exceptional merit. As for Dr. Karl Blodig, he danced back to Courmayeur, which was reached at 10.30 p.m. The start had been made twenty-one and a half hours before.

That is not all the story. Between the 13,126 odd feet of the Pic Luigi Amadeo and the 15,780 odd feet of Mont Blanc there is an interspace containing, over a considerable extent, climbing not less difficult—the "impassable" gully excepted—than that already accomplished, and quite as ready to throw stones under the provocation of too much sunshine. It was time to be up and doing. Away they rattled. After a while the holiday mood asserted itself overwhelmingly.

> "Down to Gehenna, or up to the Throne,
> He travels the fastest who travels alone."

Broadly speaking, over anything like difficult ground, a single climber travels as fast again as a roped party of two, a party of two about one-third faster than a party of three, and so on all along the line. Two parties of two will travel faster than one party of four, for the good and simple reason that No. 2 of No. 1 rope will only have himself and his leader to attend to instead of himself, his leader, and No. 3. On the same lines No. 1 of No. 2 rope will only have himself and his second to mind, and can tread as closely as he pleases on the heels of

No. 2 of No. 1 rope, instead of having to mark and keep his distance. It was an admirable idea, enabling Young and Jones to work off their holiday mood at any pace they liked, and the good doctor, escorted by Joseph Knubel, to arrive a good hour in advance of the time which would have been occupied had they not driven tandems instead of a four-in-hand.

It was a model expedition, perfectly planned. The men were mountaineers of the first order. Each could rely on himself absolutely, and, what was of equal importance, each could rely on the other. The rope was never used when unnecessary, never neglected when necessary. All contingencies had been provided for. It was a model expedition.

EXTRACT FROM "CAMBRIDGE MOUNTAINEERING," 1925–26

(By kind permission of L. R. Wager, Esq., President, C.U.M.C.)

The Brouillard Ridge

This great climb, up the longest and highest ridge in western Europe, used to arouse almost as much international interest amongst mountaineers as, more recently, the ascent of Everest. In part this was due to the fact that every detail upon it could be seen and discussed at leisure by the congregations in Courmayeur ; in part to its unique situation, on the finest wall, scenically, in the Alps ; in part to the height, scale, and actual difficulty of the glaciers and ridges that defended it ; and in good part, also, to the almost superstitious traditions which had grown up about its inaccessibility.

Mr. Oscar Eckenstein first pointed out the right line of attack. For years after he had himself reached the Col Émile

Rey, and was prevented from further higher mountaineering, he used to watch from Courmayeur for the season when the "flaw" should be free of ice. Mr. H. O. Jones of Clare, Mr. E. T. Compton, Dr. Karl Blodig, and others, all reached the col in successive explorations. The Duca degli Abruzzi, after reconnaissances by his guides, first reached the Pic Luigi Amadeo by descending the ridge from Mont Blanc. The redoubtable brothers Gugliermina, after crossing the col with many nights out, reached the same peak, after more nights out, directly up the wall from the Mont Blanc glacier. In 1911—the "perfect" season—Dr. Blodig, Dr. Pühn, Dr. Pfann, and Mr. Jones, were all waiting in Courmayeur separately to attempt the last link in the ridge climb—the ascent from the Col to the Pic. It was achieved by a combination of elements, old and new—Mr. Jones, Dr. Blodig, Joseph Knubel, and myself—in the course of a day; and repeated during the next few days by the several parties of Drs. Pühn and Pfann, both these parties spending the night after in the Vallot hut under the summit. Since 1911 the climb has not, to my knowledge, been repeated, until the ascent by Van Noorden and Wyn Harris, without guides, last year, under far less favourable conditions.

I can say advisedly, therefore, that theirs was a *magnificent* piece of mountaineering. There are no outstanding technical difficulties, except for the one short passage of the "flaw." But the mere scale of the environment is daunting to the nerves; the introductory route-finding calls for careful exploration and sound judgment, and the climbing for unrelaxing vigilance and sureness for the whole of a long day, over every variety of high-Alpine incident and interruption. I should consider it an ascent ideally contrived to distinguish between acrobatic and sound and enduring mountaineering qualities.

I need not explain that the letter which follows was written to me in reply to one of mine, asking the two mountaineers for the details. G. Winthrop Young.

Hotel du Pigne,
Arolla,
July 28, 1925.

Dear Mr. Young,—We were so pleased to receive your letter, for as yet we have had no one to talk to about the Brouillard—at Chamonix we had but a short hour after descent before we had to come on here, whilst to the Arolla type of mind the Brouillard is less than a mere name.

Your letter encourages us to hope that a few details may not be boring.

The party consisted only of Wyn Harris and myself. We had practically no moon—it rose just before dawn, but we were continuously in the shadow of the ridge. We left the Quintino Sella at midnight exactly, and crossed the glacier by previously cut steps. The ribs of rock following were rather slow work in the dark, but once on the glacier we made fair progress. We had previously worked out a route through the crevasses, which was very fortunate, as they would have been extremely troublesome in the dark otherwise. With claws the couloir itself gave no difficulty, the schrund being easily turned over to the right, and we arrived on the Col Émile Rey at 4.30 to see, on the far side, an amazing sea of cloud, tinged scarlet by the rising sun, which just swamped the Dames Anglaises, the Aiguille Noire looking a magnificent spire thrusting up through the cloud.

After a second breakfast we left (4.45) with some misgiving about the weather, and traversed (after weeks of anticipation) to the foot of the gully. It was choked with great icy columns, and, to our judgment, was quite impossible after one pitch.

Harris tried a route on the left wall, but we were brought up after about 100 feet by an incoherent snow cornice. I then started up an icy pitch on the right wall. Harris led through me and up a difficult iced chimney to an icy platform with a big bollard for belay. I then tried a traverse to the right, but was brought up after 10 feet by vertical rotten ice.

The last alternative was the wall straight above. I believe this was strictly vertical with the exception of a gangway sloping up to the right and outwards, about 2 feet wide, which finished about 8 feet from the top of the wall. Only the first step of this was icy. Harris led up the gangway, but could not manage the wall above in his rucksack, for the finger strain seemed considerable. So he returned, and I had a shot without rucksack, and taking a shoulder for the first step to save time and strain. I found I could hold myself in at the top of the gangway by finger holds, and put one hand over the top of the wall, but there were no definite holds.

After a rest I had a second shot, and quite suddenly found the solution in a long stride to the left to a fair foothold, and then up easy rocks to finish the 50-foot pitch.

I hauled up the baggage, and Harris followed very speedily. It was here that a solitary stone fell with a smack a yard from us. This was all we saw fall during the day, but it made us hurry all together up the remainder of the wall of the gully, Harris cutting up an ice cascade in a chimney on the way—rather difficult—until, bearing left, we passed a *small* névé patch on the right. Here we unroped and wandered delightfully straight up to the Amadeo, keeping on the rocks just to the left of a *long* névé slope. We reached the Amadeo at 9.45, and had half an hour's halt.

At 10.15 we left on a short rope (I led), and were going well when we were enveloped in a very appropriate mist; but

when we got higher—on to the less steep and snowy ridge before Mont Blanc de Courmayeur—the weather became worse, and we were rather worried, not knowing the geography, and thinking we should be already past Mont Blanc de Courmayeur when we were obviously not so. However, we put on claws again, Harris took the lead, and we trudged on by compass until, at 4.0, we decided that a number of bottles and sardine tins represented the summit (of Mont Blanc). It took us one and a half hours from the summit to the Vallot hut, for we had to take great care over the compass—except in occasional " thinnings " we could not see twenty yards beyond our noses—and snow and wind made map and compass work quite trying. We reached the hut at 5.30, and decided to stop the night. Actually we could have got to the Grands Mulets in another two hours, for just below the hut the usual groove-like track started down the soft snow. It was a glorious day's work ; it was a pity we had to take heavy sacks—it spoiled our times rather—but we had no more time left to return to Courmayeur, and had to take everything with us.

Stanley van Noorden, President of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club, writer of this singularly modest account of a singularly great achievement, was killed soon afterwards on Snowdon, within sight and easy hearing of the carriage road over the Llanberis Pass. With Mr. H. R. C. Carr he was finishing off the day's climbing on the rocks in Cwm Glas, on the westerly spur of Cyrn Las. The last little bit of the climb was deceptively difficult, and the take-off unsatisfactory. Van Noorden, who was leading, succeeded in getting up, but Carr found his route too difficult, and said he would try another way. Having called out when he was

starting, and having been assured that it was all right—which signifies that the leader was satisfied that he could hold him securely with the rope in case of a slip—he essayed the climb. Almost immediately he slipped and came off, fetching away Van Noorden. Van Noorden was slung clean away from the rocks, and killed instantly. Carr was desperately injured. From about four on the afternoon of 2nd September to the evening of 4th September he lay out, without food and exposed to the most inclement weather, although search-parties were scouring the ground high and low. Then he was found, carefully tended, and conveyed to hospital. After which he got well, and has since enjoyed—really—more than one expedition in the Alps.

The general opinion is that Van Noorden must have been changing his stance at the moment of the slip, but he was wearing rubber soles, and these, on wet grass or rock, afford dangerously insecure foothold.

THE CONQUEST OF THE AIGUILLES

THE Aiguilles of Mont Blanc were the Heralds of the Challenge of the Inaccessible. The Monarch of Mountains had fallen from his high estate : his once inviolable court could be visited almost at will by any able-bodied man, sound in wind and limb, who had a sufficiency of money to pay the entrance fee. All along the steps of this throne, however, were unconquered satellites, projections of hard rock which had endured whilst the forces of Nature had crushed or swept away their more feeble surroundings. They varied in bulk, these satellites, from the Verte, a fine mountain in itself, to the Géant, a fantastic pinnacle, and the Grépon, perhaps the most famous of all, an insignificant splinter which cannot be detected by the stranger unless pointed out, and would not be missed from the scenery, except by the mountaineer, if removed in a night.

The aiguilles, or needles, are, in fact, projections of hard rock, which protrude in definite forms from the snow, always precipitous, frequently so from base to summit. There is no particular object in climbing them except to see whether they can be climbed first of all, and for ever thereafter for the sport of climbing. True it is that Adams Reilly climbed the Argentière because it seemed to him the most suitable point from which to prosecute his survey of the chain of Mont Blanc, but for the most part it is the inaccessibility that attracts.

Inaccessibility must not be too rigorously interpreted. Mummery writes : " It has frequently been observed that all mountains appear doomed to pass through three stages : an inaccessible peak ; the most difficult climb in the Alps ; an easy day for a lady." Not that the Grépon, to which this passage was relative, ever was or ever is likely to be an easy day for a lady, in the sense of a comparatively primrose path, even for a modern lady climber. It is amusing to contrast the charmingly (and lengthily) gowned " Vision of the Summit," from C. T. Dent's *Above the Snow-line*, with the reality on the Grépon, in 1893, of Miss Bristow " surrounded on three sides by nothing, and blocked in front with the camera," photographing the Crack, or with her representative in the present year of grace, doubleted, knickered, puttied and clinkered who, amongst other valuable lessons imparted to the Inferior Sex, teaches by her relative weakness that, though it may be excellent for the Lord of Creation to have a giant's strength, it is imbecile to use twice as much of it as is needed to overcome a pitch ; that it is possible to go on to and even come off a mountain trim and neat ; and that garments of shreds and patches, the nails of a bootblack, and the fingers of an oakum picker are not essential to the outfit of Ye Compleat Mountaineer.

The aiguilles fell, but they did not go down like a row of tin soldiers. The Dru, as has been noted, held out against eighteen attacks ; the Géant was only subdued by sapping and mining ; the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret, the last to yield, did its best to freeze its assailant to death. This particular aiguille, however, is a thing apart, over away on the Courmayeur side, and is not a place of entertainment visited by holiday crowds. Incidentally, the immediate object of this ascent was not the conquest of the aiguille, but to ascertain,

for the satisfaction of his brother, the nature of the accident in which Professor J. M. Balfour with his guide, Johann Petrus, lost their lives. Mr. H. S. (now Sir Seymour) King's party ascended to a point opposite the place on which Mr. Balfour was killed, and noting that this face of the aiguille was constantly raked by falling stones, had no difficulty in determining the cause of the accident. Having got so far, it occurred to Mr. King that he might as well take in the aiguille, and, having rounded the head of the chasm intervening between himself and the peak, attacked it in reverse and captured it. After which he quietly returned to Courmayeur, having spent two nights out on the high ice without *cabane*, or tent, or *gîte*, or fire. This exploit, though not spectacular, was, and remains, amazing.

The aiguilles have been called by less complimentary titles than Heralds of the Inaccessible, and that, too, by the reposeful student of the valley and not the unhappy climber at grips with them. Ruskin is commonly reputed to have compared them to greased poles at a fair. This popular allegation is unjust. Ruskin loved and reverenced the mountains, and assuredly did not hold in enmity skill, courage, enterprise, and endeavour. The criticism must be read as a whole. When victory over a hitherto unvanquished peak is celebrated by toy-cannon, squibs, flares, crackers, etc., the suggestion of the vulgarity of a fair is scarcely modified by the spectacle of a member of the Alpine Club, even the tallest, dancing a *pas seul* on a table.

"High in the stainless imminence of air" the aiguilles stood untouched and untouchable by either unmerited stigma or its cause—though conquered, scarcely less challenging and quite as certainly no less attractive. In this last word sounds the knell of their declension from the Inaccessible to the—

THE GRÉPON FROM THE AIGUILLE DE TACUL.
(*Photo, John F. Burton.*)

much qualified—Easy Day. No form of mountaineering is more fascinating than the scaling of these isolated pinnacles. Moreover, they possess, and confer, a reputation which is perhaps a little spurious. That is to say, the young aspirant to mountaineering fame, who had taken in the Monte Rosa or the Zinal Rothhorn, or perhaps the Jungfrau, or even the Matterhorn, had done well and worshipfully; but if he returned with the scalps of the Charmoz and Grépon hanging to his girdle, testimonies to his skill and nerve and strength, he had done excellent well—had, in fact, accomplished something to talk about.

True it is that, if worthy of the noble sport, he was probably not conversational. He recognized somewhere at the back of his consciousness that the strength and skill which had carried him to victory were not his own, but, to adapt Sir Claud Schuster, that of two sturdy peasants who, during the ascent, had exchanged in patois very uncomplimentary remarks on his capacity as a climber. He would most probably go again, determined to do better, and would do better. A second ascent of a difficult rock-climb is, unless the climber is a duffer, easier than the first, the third markedly easier. For this reason: he knows what is before him; he will know, too, where effort is required and where he may conserve his strength for future effort; also he will know the nature of the effort required, and will not waste strength and patience—which is another word for temper—in puzzling out how to tackle a pitch, or feeling about for holds; he will, unless a duffer, remember where they are; he will climb with more ease and precision, and as a result the ascent, though appreciably easier, will become appreciably more enjoyable. Moreover, with years will come experience, and if with these factors is combined unusual mountaineering ability, it is not surprising to find, in

a few seasons, the climber taking the bygone inaccessible object of his ambition almost in his stride.

Now the natural "born mountaineer" prefers ascents he cannot take in his stride. He rejoices in a foeman worthy of his steel, with whom an encounter shall not be suicidal, yet shall strain his resources to the cracking point. And so we come to the last phase—attainment, with a bare margin of safety by some "by-path" (p. 18). Thus inspired, it almost follows that a mountaineer of a capacity to take in some three or four of these inaccessible pinnacles as a rollicking, holiday jaunt, should look about for something which would really extend him. Accordingly he looked about, and decided on the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon.

Now the Grépon has already been referred to as an insignificant splinter—insignificant, of course, relatively to its vast surroundings. This qualification, however, refers particularly to the summit pinnacle, not to the Mer de Glace face, a most formidable precipice, all that heart could desire. Still, to the heart of Mr. Geoffrey Winthrop Young, the gentleman inspired with the vision of attainment by a bare margin and a desire to extend himself, it suffered from one slight disability—it had been climbed before by a Mr. Ryan.

This Mr. Ryan was a featherweight of great skill and greater daring who, in company with the Lochmatters—guides of equal daring, superb skill, and incalculable strength and endurance, though assuredly not featherweights—had accomplished incredible feats. The incredulity attaching to these exploits was emphasized by the fact that Mr. Ryan becomes, in French, M. Rien. Consequently, when some tourist would ask if any one had ever scaled such and such an impossible-looking cliff, the answer would be: "*Mais oui! M. Rien*"—which

was interpreted, quite inaccurately, as the guide's facetious way of saying that it was unscalable.

Still the trouble was not past remedy. There might be another route of ascent; it would probably be a shade or two more difficult, but that would only add zest to the venture. For this companions were essential, also capable and desirous of so extending themselves. These were neither far to seek nor difficult to enlist; but there were other factors to combine—the condition of the mountain and common opportunity. It may be taken as read that with the news of Ryan's ascent arose in more than one mountaineering bosom the desire to go and do likewise. On the rollicking holiday alluded to, Winthrop Young had, with his guide, Joseph Knubel, examined the face, traced out Ryan's route, and had resolved to go and do unlikewise. That is to say, Winthrop Young had. Whether Knubel was quite so keen just then is a matter on which subsequent developments suggest a shadow of doubt. At long last, however, the day arrived, and the guides, Joseph Knubel and Henri Brocherel, with G. W. Young, H. O. Jones, and R. Todhunter, foregathered for the essay.

The day arrived in very leisurely fashion. The preliminaries had been somewhat strenuous—the names of Knubel, G. W. Young, and H. O. Jones have occurred already in this volume, and the nature of this enterprise may be anticipated. Wherefore, being keyed up to concert pitch, they decided to slack a little and trust to the weather keeping favourable. It was a heroic trust, and was happily justified. Of course, familiar words are capable of unfamiliar interpretation. Thus, "if the rain is lying around, in a kind of general way on the ground, it is then definitely located, it is doing something—that is, *resting* (which is one of the German grammar's ideas of doing something)." Conversely, by way of relaxation, Jones and

Todhunter made the traverse of Mont Blanc, by the Rochers Rouges, an expedition occupying about a third of a week, and Young "idled up under the trees to the Col du Géant, and *next* day sped peaceably down the ice-falls and the long glacier to the Montanvert." This seems to indicate that the party were at least in condition. Joseph Knubel seems really to have done nothing specially "lazy." He only went round with the baggage. He might have stayed in bed for a week, and it would probably have made no difference. Very few, if any, finer mountaineers have lived than Knubel. He is not a large man, but, if Tennyson be right, he must be a Swiss Galahad, for his strength is as the strength of ten. He may perhaps be a little moody, but he is assuredly lovable.

It was an ideal party, ideal weather, and an ideal climb—provided it would go. As it was, the attack was near to being turned at the start. The very factor which had melted the ice so freely as to make certain difficult ascents comparatively easy, and impossible climbs possible, had so shrunk the bergschrund at the foot of the great precipice as to make it to all seeming impassable. Impregnable it certainly was to direct assault, but a difficult turning movement left it behind and below, and the ascent of the rocks commenced in earnest, and continued in nothing but earnest to its accomplishment.

Stay! Was Knubel in earnest? Mr. Young is of an extraordinarily sympathetic nature—his poetry testifies to that—and this sympathy, this capacity for sharing the feelings, though unexpressed, of others convinced him that Knubel was not in earnest—not in dead earnest. In other words, the guide had made up his mind that a new route was impracticable, and was about to emphasize the accuracy of his unspoken theory by going thus far and no farther. There were, it is clear from the

narrative, only two lines of attack open to the party from their then base. That on the right was weighted out of the race ; it had been climbed before—and it did not lead to the highest point. The final significance of this infirmity will become apparent later. That on the left, even if practicable, was unattainable, or seemed so—especially to Knubel. The *via media* terminated on a perfectly impossible impasse, and towards this impasse, with Knubel at the wheel in the bow, the party was slowly drifting upwards. Knubel was, in fact, climbing without conviction to establish his own conviction that the desired route was impracticable.

All this Mr. Young's sympathetic eye, assisted by other manifestations, read in Knubel's back. Few things are more expressive than a back—one has only to see a lady walk away in a temper to be quite, quite sure of that. Mr. Young's sympathetic nature also diagnosed that Knubel, if once he realized that he had let down his party in a moment of temper of that brand, would thereafter have been disposed to cut his 80-foot Alpine rope into lengths of 10 feet and hang himself eight separate times. Besides which manifold catastrophe there remained a factor, more immediate and much more important—the object of the expedition would be frustrated almost before fairly essayed. Half-hearted work had to be stopped, and stopped at once, before it became irremediable. Mr. Young decided to go and see for himself whether the unattainable was so or not. He decided it was not.

The attainment seems to have been something of a trial of faith as well as of skill, nerve, and muscle. The way to the paradise of the summit was cut off from the pilgrims by all sorts of infernal devices : (1) a vertical ditch, vertical in three ways—at the side you descended, at the side you ascended, and at the bottom to which you clung ; (2) a vertical rampart

on the same lines, reversing ascent and descent, and clinging to the top instead of the bottom; (3) a horrible, wide, flat, gaping vertical opening, on the far side of which was a vertical scramble on to the promising vertical line to the summit—and then the hard work would commence. Of course vertical must not be construed quite literally, but it is near enough. It signifies "so steep that, in the event of a slip, its divergence from 90° would make no possible difference." Also, although the cliff was 4,000 feet high, the party were so high up that it would make no possible difference to them whether they fell from the summit or from where they were.

Mr. Young unroped and constituted a forlorn hope to the verge of the gape, discovered a way across it, and called on the others to come and confirm. They came and confirmed. Knubel came also, and after some cavilling, deftly confuted by Mr. Young, confirmed. Also, from that moment he was converted from Mr. Ready-to-halt into Mr. Greatheart. Thenceforward there was no stopping him, and therein lies the miracle of the climb.

The crossing of the couloir was something of a venture. Stones select fissures on a mountain side to slip along on the same principle that water does runnels on a slope, and their pace is excessive. On a big, rotten mountain-face they come in battalions; on a hard rock-face, terminating in a spike, like the Grépon, they come as single spies. It has been argued that, given certain conditions, a single spy may be as dangerous as a battalion. The party were denied the opportunity of testing this theory. Not a stone fell.

They climbed on to the bridge-head of that route to paradise whereon a slip is death, and breakfasted. Again they ascended, and kept on ascending. At one of the few spots where the party could approximate to foregathering they halted long

enough for a ceremony, and christened the place the Niche des Amis. Then

"Sunward! Oh, sunward!
Rough is the highway:
Onward, still onward.

Upward and forward.
Time will restore us.
Light is above us,
Rest is before us."

The character of the next convenient rest is thus epitomized by Mr. Young: "I hesitate to pronounce upon the emotions of an intelligent fly as it sits on a picture nail in a cathedral and looks up at the vaulting and down at the pavement, but I am certain our outlook must have been much the same. And then—we were not flies."

Some distance higher up the leaders did not exactly take the wrong turning—in fact, they did not turn, and so missed the true line. It is a very easy thing to do. Mountaineering history, like other history, has a habit of duplicating itself. A now well-known and very difficult English climb, only about one-tenth of the height of the Grépon face, had been studied and explored time and again, and at length the pioneers came to the conclusion that all was feasible except the last 50 feet or thereabouts. Accordingly, on the occasion of the next attack, some interested friends went round by an easy way to the top to render help if needed, and so save the weariness of a retreat. The last difficulty proved as intractable as feared. The rope was lowered, and the leader, morally and physically assisted thereby, struggled up. The second followed in like manner. Meanwhile the third had wandered a short distance away along a ledge and came on a chimney, about one-third as easy as the impracticable finish, affording a safe

and feasible way to the summit. A similar discovery has been since made with regard to this portion of Mr. Young's route up the Grépon face, and as a consequence the terrific portion of the climb above this point is now eliminated from the ascent. Were it not so, very, very few would reach the summit by the great face. In fact, not many do as things are.

The party started again, straight ahead, up a crack. After a while Knubel got stuck. Brocherel joined him and stuck also. Young had to stick where he was, alone, save for the company of Knubel's sack, which the guide had considerately passed down to him. After a while he was joined by Jones, who also stuck, the traffic being blocked by Young, and Todhunter brought up the rear in the same manner. Whilst in this precarious position there fell on Mr. Young's ears an ominous tick-tack. Knubel was engaged on the "axe-cling." He had known that the guides were wrestling with something specially stiff high up above him, but this sound, with its significance, was, in his own words, distasteful.

This significance may be thus popularly explained. Take a stretch of pavement about as long as an upholsterer's ladder. Cock it up at the angle at which such ladders are usually set against houses. Into the interstices between the flags drive the picks of a series of pick-axes as firmly as they will hold, which would generally be not very firmly. Climb up the slab of pavement by the shafts and heads of the axes. To play the game even partially, an axe once utilized should be discarded and kicked down, but this rigour is not essential. In Knubel's case he had to supply this series of axe-shafts with his one and only axe, taking it out of one nick, fitting it into another, climbing up it, taking it out and fitting it in again, clinging in the intervals to nothing in particular, compared with which a pavement at a high angle would afford good

CROSSING A SNOW-SLOPE.

(*Photo, Abraham, Keswick.*)

holding, and mounting above some thousands of feet of nothing at all. One is justified in terming this amazing performance the miracle of the climb, or rather one of the miracles. There was another to follow, a good deal later.

When Mr. Young reached the severe passage, he found his worst fears realized, and a considerable adverse balance thrown in, for the slab which constituted the main difficulty overhung at its base. Still, he was allowed little time for reflection. Brocherel, the second guide, who had been holding on, hand and foot, to next to nothing, made way for Mr. Young by taking position on something less, and then moved on, incidentally using Mr. Young's head as a start. Ultimately he arrived. One is permitted to suspect that Knubel gave Brocherel a tight rope during the ascent. A tight rope does not signify that one is pulled, but that the rope is kept consistently taut. The distinction is something of that between a wooden and a rope ladder. It allows no play for vagaries. Mr. Young then made room for Mr. Jones in the same manner, stood on his head in the same manner, and ascended in much the same manner. Whereafter an extra rope was sent down for the remainder of the party, especially Mr. Todhunter, who was left with no one's head to stand on.

Close to the termination of this most exacting section the kindly genius of the mountain had provided a haven of rest, and the party rested gratefully—all, it would seem, except Knubel. At the earliest possible opportunity "like fire from flint he glanced away," and the rest followed and landed out on the gap between the Pic Balfour and the summit.

This would never do. They had launched into the unknown and arrived at the known before the time. They were, in fact, in the position of a man who sets out to escalade a house to the apex of its gable and finds himself on the

horizontal coping of the roof at the gable's base. Of course, the common-sense way of attaining his objective would be to swarm up the inclined coping of the gable to its point. That, however, would not be "climbing the climb through." To do this it would be necessary to go out on the wall again and thence climb upward and outward and over the apex of the gable coping. This is what the party actually did—the second miracle.

The apex of the gable was cracked vertically as if, to revert to the crude simile, the mortar had fallen out of the joint of the coping. Up this fissure lay the route to the summit of the Grépon, and from it Knubel was forced to retire time and again, despite the sturdy aid of Brocherel. How he at length accomplished it can only be told in Mr. Young's own words.

"Joseph was in the throes of a last daring inspiration. He whipped his axe upward, balanced himself audaciously outward, and with lightning speed wedged the point of the axe-shaft into the crack above the bulge of the canopy" (the lower edge of the coping), "so that the axe-head projected horizontally and frailly into space, between our heads and the sky. Except for its sensational circumstance the next manœuvre looked like a simple gymnasium trick. Using the wedged shaft as a horizontal bar, Joseph dangled clear of the niche, and swung himself up on it as adroitly as a Japanese juggler, until he was standing upon it—over us and nothingness." After which he climbed out on to the summit, and there, as soon as he had recovered a sufficiency of breath for haulage purposes, the remainder of the party joined him, very much, so far as can be judged, after the manner of fish over a gunwale.

The ascent has, as Mr. Young hoped, "now that the horrific slab has been eliminated," been repeated—on one

occasion by an English amateur party, guideless. Of the three amateurs who first assembled in the Niche des Amis, two, alas! are no more. H. O. Jones met his death on Mont Blanc under circumstances to be detailed later. Todhunter succumbed to that last infirmity of mountaineers—the refusal to recognize the weight of the hand of time. With increasing years comes increasing skill, which seems to cheat for a season the relentless pressure, but the hour creeps inevitably nearer. In brief, when the half-century is left behind one begins unwillingly to recognize that when one is tired one *is* tired. One rallies time and again and comes up smiling, but the power of recuperation lessens steadily. When one is the wrong side of sixty, five minutes' rest will not pull you together, nor ten nor twenty neither; and, if one persists, the second will come when fatigue will be translated into exhaustion almost with the suddenness of a blow. Thus it befell Todhunter when leading in the Dolomites.

THE SILBERHORN

SIR CLAUD SCHUSTER records, in his inimitable *Peaks and Pleasant Pastures*, that he at some time or other had gathered that one of the first aids to success was the art of losing one's temper at the right moment. This is not quite how he puts it, but it is quite what he means. Also proof that the theorem is correct was exemplified by one Ambrose Supersax, *circ.* 10 a.m., September 24, 1887, on the Roththal face of the Silberhorn. Had he lost his temper an hour earlier the essay would almost assuredly have failed almost at its inception ; had he lost it an hour later, it would more than likely have terminated in disaster. As it was, he lost his temper exactly at the right moment. As a consequence, the hitherto unclimbable was climbed, the eyes of Mr. C. E. Mathews, Herr E. von Fellenberg and Melchior Anderegg, with two other guides, were severally and collectively wiped, and the brandy in Mr. H. S. (now Sir Seymour) King's flask frozen. This last is consoling. It certainly indicates that undue dilution of alcoholic refreshment was not unknown before the War.

The Silberhorn is unfortunately situated. It is cheek by jowl with a monk, an ogre, and a bride (presumably Jungfrau does signify bride ; assuredly it does not mean the " white snow-maiden " of popular articles). A big lot these, the young lady dominating all. In the familiar and popular photograph

the Silberhorn features only as an excrescence, so unobtrusive that few even care to ask its name, or, if told, care to remember it. It is, to revert as always when possible to home illustrations, very much what Slight Side is to Scafell, and Slight Side is quite a worthy little fell, an atrocious grind, and perhaps some day some genius will discover some way of breaking one's neck there or thereabouts.

In the old time of our fathers—or grandfathers as the case may be—the true faith was that the right way to a summit was the rational way. Fancy variations were heresy. Sir Seymour was an early heretic. He speaks, unashamedly, of testing the possibility of ascending the Silberhorn from the Roththal. The right way, of course, would have been to stroll over the summit *en route* for the Jungfrau instead of courting suicide on its north-west face. As a matter of fact, this right way and wrong way is largely humbug. It is very much like the oft-repeated and entirely irrefutable and altogether admirable denunciation of solitary scrambling. A noted Alpinist writes that men who insist on climbing alone are worse than kleptomaniacs. "And so say all of us." How often it is a case of Satan rebuking sin is a question it were unwise to pursue.

This naughty-minded, unorthodox Englishman, together with two equally depraved guides, Louis Zurbrücken and Ambrose Supersax, and a porter of dubious faith, set out on 23rd September. They had to camp out, of course, which was all in the day's and night's work, but they could not get started till five the following morning. As a matter of fact, it was too late in the season ; the nights were too long and the days too short for so serious an expedition as this proved.

At the time, however, it was not "proven." Still, in case of it turning out more arduous than anticipated, they had

arranged that the porter should abide by the paraphernalia till they reached a given point, as it was quite possible they might have to stay another night on the mountain. If they signalled to him, he was to stay where he was till they turned up—or rather down. If they did not, "he might pack up his things and go home." Happily they did not signal. Considerable sympathy, in any case, seems the porter's due, but not so much as if they had signalled. They did have to stay another night on the mountain, but not quite as or where they had anticipated.

The climbing was difficult, but that was expected—was, in fact, the reason of their being there. The immediate objective was to reach the crest of an *arête* or ridge leading to the summit, the ultimate object was the summit via the *arête*. The most practicable way of attaining the crest of the *arête* seemed by a gap near its western end. The most practicable way of attaining the gap was by what Sir Seymour apologetically terms a couloir. Trough is perhaps a better word. Horrible places these. The holds, where in being, were generally turned wrong way about, and even such were not in profusion. Nevertheless they found, "with the exception of one difficult piece, nothing to check them," till they reached the gap. There they struck an overhang.

Rather was it a collection of overhangs. "The rocks hung over on every side." Time and again they tried, individually and collectively, and time and again they failed. The exasperating part of the business was that the desired crest was only about 20 feet above their heads. So far as attainment, it seemed it might have been 2,000 feet. As for signalling to the porter from the appointed peak, that was outside the range of practicabilities, inasmuch as there appeared no possibility of reaching the appointed peak. There

seemed no alternative but to return in shame and confusion of face.

They sat down to consider, and, as in the consideration of all grave issues in sporting circles, the discussion was solemnized by a meal. During the meal it was natural that the searching eye of Sir Seymour should light on a bottle. The vintage was old—it had been laid down twenty-three years before. It was not alcoholic, it was not liquid, but it contained a stimulant more powerful than the most fiery compound ever brewed. The components were the names of Mr. C. E. Mathews, one of the founders and presidents of the Alpine Club, Melchior Anderegg, prince of guides, Herr E. von Fellenberg and two other guides, appended to a statement that they had got thus far, that it was a case of thus far and no farther—that they had, in fact, reached the limit of possibility.

It was at this exact psychological moment that Supersax elected to lose his temper. The script acted like an electric intoxicant on him. He said several things. "He vowed he would never go back, and nothing under heaven should turn him back; he would get on to the ridge. We might do as we liked—he meant to stay there till he had." And he did.

This is how he did it. He had himself lowered down the face of the mountain till he had run out 100 feet of rope. Another 80 feet were tied on, and he ran that out too. Then, despite remonstrances, he gathered in all the rope, slung it over his shoulder, "and proceeded, while we sat down and waited, with no little anxiety, lest some accident should befall him." Stuck as the others were at the top of that unhallowed trough, without a foot of rope between them, one may in one's inmost thoughts wonder whether that anxiety was wholly altruistic, but on no account must one admit it.

After an apprehensive half-hour the watchers were relieved by a shout overhead, followed by a welcome vision of Supersax's face. "It really," writes Sir Seymour, "was a magnificent exhibition both of pluck and skill." Mental relief was followed by physical aid. The rope was let down, and first the knapsack and axes, and then the two men were assisted up. The impedimenta had out and away the best of the deal. Sir Seymour was exceedingly glad of some of the brandy, happily as yet unfrozen.

This was just the beginning of troubles. The ridge soon became impracticable, and the party were forced on a formidable ice-wall. Step-cutting is always hard work, but in this case, owing to the iron consistency of the ice, it became hard labour. After a while the angle became so severe that they were forced back on to the ridge. At length the summit was attained. They looked down and saw the porter, but made no signal of return, and that patient man packed up and descended.

It was by that time one o'clock, and by six it would be dark. Haste was imperative, but haste was impossible. They were separated from the Jungfrau itself by a narrow neck ; to hark home again for examples in miniature, they were like people who had climbed the Ennerdale face of the Steeple pinnacle, and wanted to get on to and over Scoatfell. It was possible to descend from the gap and make a way to the Wengern Alp, but this would have necessitated crossing a glacier which none of them knew. The alternative was to plug on over the Jungfrau and try and reach either the Bergli or Concordia huts. It was very slow plugging. The fates were against them. The summit was sheathed in snow as hard as ice. There was no such thing as kicking steps. Every one had to be cut. The sunset view from the summit of the Jungfrau was wondrous

in its beauty, but they had no time to consider views. They had to consider their lives. Down they went in the hope of hitting off the steps of some party that had been on the mountain that day. Still the fates were against them. The mountain had been unvisited. At length they were pulled up finally, and had to spend the night in a crevice between two rocks, having first cleared the snow off the floor of this delectable sleeping apartment with their axes. The upper leathers of their boots had frozen, and nothing could persuade them to thaw.

Here the party made a mistake. They decided that it would be wiser to take only a little bread and a mouthful of brandy overnight, leaving the remainder of the provisions for as hearty a meal as might be in the morning. Alas! after a night spent in stamping of feet and flapping of arms to avoid frostbite, they found that "the wine and brandy had frozen during the night, and were solid lumps of ice; the bread required nothing less than an ice-axe to cut it, and then would probably have flown into chips like a log of wood; the three remaining eggs had been converted into icicles." So they started "hungry and thirsty," but with unfainting souls. Assisted by a drink of water and a few ginger-nuts, they reached Grindelwald at 3 p.m. There Sir Seymour, instead of going to bed or getting buried like an ordinary person, had an excellent dinner at the Bear, and at half-past four was driving to Interlaken. What happened to the guides is not recorded. Probably they put on dress kit and went to a dance.

Note.—It is interesting to record that the two most notable ascents of the Silberhorn precipice, Sir Seymour King's, above recorded, and Almer's by the north-west face, were repeated for the first time in the same year, 1926.

SKAGASTÖLSTIND

"ON two occasions I completed the first ascent of a difficult mountain alone, and feel certain that under similar circumstances most of my Alpine friends would have done the same, and that they would also agree with me in saying that the stupid practice of solitary climbing cannot be too severely condemned."

It may be added that the writer has omitted to add, after "my Alpine friends would have done the same," the words "if they could."

Again, it will be seen that Skagastölstind was only ascended eight times in sixteen years, although seven unsuccessful attempts are recorded during the same period. (1) 1876. 21st July: William Cecil Slingsby (E. Mohn and the guide, Knut Lykken, went as far as Mohn's Skar). Then follows a list of ascents. (2) 1878. (3) 1880. (4) 1882. (5) 1885. (6) 1888. (7) 1890. (8) 1891.

"Three of the ascents named above were completed by solitary climbers, a form of mountaineering which can hardly be too severely condemned, unless the conditions are wholly exceptional." From which it is quite clear that as "there is a river in Macedon, and there is also, moreover, a river at Monmouth; it is called Wye at Monmouth, put it is beyond my prains what is the name of the other river . . . and there is salmons in both." So there are climbers in Norway, and

there are also, moreover, climbers in England; one is called Slingsby in England, put it is out of my prains what are the names of the others; and it is also, moreover, out of my prains to explain their views on solitary climbing.

The All-England series pronounces that men who climb alone are worse than kleptomaniacs, in that the kleptomaniac, though he knows he is doing wrong, cannot help himself, whereas the solitary climber knows he is doing wrong, can help it, and still persists in so doing.

Skagastölstind has possibly been climbed single-handed more often than any other considerable mountain. This may seem to suggest that it is an easy peak. That is a mistake. On the first ascent Slingsby went on alone because his two companions did not feel justified in following—and they were right. There was no suggestion of funking it. They were inadequately shod, and, had they accompanied Slingsby, they would have been a source of peril to him rather—very much rather—than of safety. Whether such altruistic considerations entered their heads matters not. They would have been wrong to go on. Slingsby, rather than be beaten in the last round, stuck to it and won through.

Skagastölstind's proud crest had thrice been scaled by an individual, but worse was to follow. At Upsala University was a professor—desperate fellows these professors, as noted elsewhere—yclept Erik Ullèn. He seems to have climbed the mountain by every possible route, frequently by himself. How, considering his height, he managed Heftye's Chimney, to start which much taller men often welcome a shoulder, is a marvel. On one occasion he had a slip on his voyage to the base, and so was left by his party with a damaged knee-cap. After a short spell of repose his restless wishes began to soar. True, he had a damaged knee. On the other count,

he was a past-master of the art of walking on his hands. Off he hobbled to Skagastölstind and climbed it, game leg and all. It is unnecessary to add that he was a superb climber.

As has been written, Skagastölstind is not an easy mountain. It is a capital mistake to underrate difficulties. It is criminal to understate them. Some years after Slingsby's ascent, a young tourist with two guides made a new route up the peak. It was easier than the original, but by no means easy. Unhappily he wrote an account of the climb, which suggested that it was ; more unhappily, it fell into the hands of a young man, one Tönsberg, who was staying with his wife in the neighbourhood, recruiting from brain-fever. He was benefiting greatly, and it was not unnatural that he should think that a climb up an easy mountain would do him any amount of good. All might have gone well had not the weather turned Turk. It is probable that he was in a highly excitable condition, for it was only on the promise that they should turn back that Pedler, one of the guides when the new route was discovered, agreed to accompany him. He most likely thought it was best to humour the excited man, and also to see that he came to no harm. He had not reckoned on the strength of that disordered brain. When the time came to turn, Tönsberg refused. His companions endeavoured to hold him back with a rope, but he was too strong ; he " broke away, and in twenty strides he disappeared in the mist." Not till five weeks later was his body recovered, having fallen somewhere over 2,000 feet.

One can easily drop 2,000 feet on Skagastölstind. Here is a passage from Mr. Slingsby's book : " I have been on many a narrow ledge on the face of many a square-cut precipice such as that flat footpath on the Mer de Glace face of the Aiguille de Grépon, but never have I seen a precipice so high, so clean

cut, so absorbingly interesting as this. Look over the edge ; don't be frightened, the others will hold you tight. See those *séracs* on the Slingsbybrae over 2,000 feet straight below you ? There is no lateral moraine there. No indeed. The rocks on this face of Skagastölstind are wellnigh imperishable and everlasting. This huge perpendicular wall rises straight out of the ice, and there is nothing to carry the eye down till it sees the glacier."

This, of course, is an extreme instance of a semi-lunatic climbing alone, and is only mentioned on account of its connection with the Norse mountain. Nevertheless there have been accidents innumerable to individuals which would, in all probability, not have occurred with a roped party—from the young gentleman, sung of by Longfellow, who, disregarding the warnings of the peasant and the allurements of a somewhat forward young lady, perished from exposure and exhaustion in the neighbourhood of the Great St. Bernard Pass, to Winkler. This Winkler was a working printer from Munich, and a remarkable cragsman. He attacked, single-handed, some of the most formidable Dolomite summits—one of which is named after him—and conquered them. Dolomite climbing is quite distinct from that of other regions. When one speaks of a sheer precipice amongst the Dolomites one means sheer 90°, not 75° or 70°. On the other hand, the quality of the rock surface is amazing, in some places like petrified sponge, in others like glorified sandpaper. There is a delusion that it is absolutely sound, a delusion as dangerous as solitary scrambling. It is curious that that wonderful climber, Norman Neruda, who had probably made more solitary ascents in the Dolomites than any other three men, should have been killed when leading a party up his favourite mountain, the Five-finger Spitz, which he had ascended by

every known route. As a matter of fact, he was not quite in the best of health, and so had really no business on the mountain at all. Winkler ended his career by tackling the western face of the Weisshorn. Whatever may be said for or against solitary climbing, there can be no question but that a single-handed attack on one of the great Swiss snow peaks is simply suicidal. If one is not killed, one ought to be. All that is known of Winkler's fate is that his cap was found amongst some avalanche débris.

On the other hand, towards the end of last century a young gentleman from Oxford came to the Ennerdale face of Great Gable in Cumberland, scaled the precipice, crossed the summit of the fell, descended towards Wasdale by a rugged and extremely steep rock *arête*, at the foot of which he was attracted by the celebrated Napes Needle. This well-known climb consists of, roughly, a wedge of crag, vertical on three sides and very steep on the fourth. On its summit is poised a great block of rock, which overhangs the supporting shaft on most sides, and where it does not, affords very inadequate foothold, when the foot can be placed on it—a difficult business. Its height on the short side is some 30 odd feet, and on the others three times as great. It is a difficult climb technically, and both difficult and nerve-trying at the finish, where the body has to be dragged up on not very satisfactory holds over one of the other sides. This young Oxonian scaled the Needle and got to the top in safety, rested, and after due deliberation—small wonder—came down again in safety. The descent of that top-block must have been a wicked strain on the nerve. After which he did other climbs on Scafell and elsewhere. Now it is quite obvious that this worse than kleptomaniac, whatever his exploits in other fields of mountaineering, was deserving of the severest censure from the

mountaineering community. Instead of which, no mountaineering club is complete without him as a member, honorary or otherwise. Wherefore it is very clear that his close friend Slingsby was talking through his neck in his downright denunciation of solitary climbing, or—shall it be written ?—speaking on general principles.

Again, the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District sing in their club song, " We've worn the Needle slim," and they have. Since the day of its first conquest it has been ascended and descended literally thousands of times. One is not a hadji until one has been up the Needle. Up till quite recently, also, it has been climbed in nailed boots, which have polished and scraped it till there is " divil a hould to be had anywhere at all, at all," or words to that effect. Consequently it is generally climbed in rubber-soled shoes lest it become smooth to the point of inaccessibility. It is difficult even in these. Nevertheless experts simply romp up and down it. Still, it is a difficult climb in rubbers, it was a difficult climb in boots, and is now a very difficult climb in boots. All of which points to the moral that because a climber accomplishes an ascent alone it does not in the least bit follow that that ascent is easy.

The other moral is that solitary scrambling is, so far as rock work is concerned, largely dependent on the personal equation. If the average novice attempted the Needle, he probably would not come to serious harm, because he would be floored by the first crack. Still the attempt would be entirely unwarrantable. To tell a Wasdale expert that he was not justified in going up and down the Needle single-handed would be to make oneself ridiculous. Increasing the scale, similar considerations enter. One may say that Norman Neruda's solitary climbs on the Five-finger Spitz were jus-

tifiable for him owing to his intimate acquaintance with the mountain, and that, *per contra*, Winkler's ascents were unwarrantable. Nothing can be said in defence of solitary wanderings on glaciers or snow and ice, yet Whymper did a good deal of solitary poking about unrebuked. True, he as nearly as possible ended his career on the Tête du Lion, but as he was not killed, nothing was said. Still, with all reverence to that great man's memory, it was better luck than good management.

Having thus placed the case for and against solitary climbing as impartially as possible before the reader, it will be well to make for the foot of the mountain with which the name of Slingsby is inseparably linked, not only in England, but in Norway. That gallant race, whose kinship with us will always remain in close and affectionate evidence so long as the English Lake District remains, were most assuredly not less appreciative of our countryman's skill and courage than his comrades of his native land. If it had been possible to rechristen Skagastölstind in his honour, it is quite likely that they would have done so. As it was, they conferred his name on the glacier which lies along the eastern base of the mountain. This, in fact the mountain itself, is by no means easy of attainment. For the most part the coast-line of the fells are featureless as regards their crests, great round buttresses descending with extreme steepness to the edge of the fiords. These fiords cut their way for an incredible distance into the heart of the country, and the Sogne Fiord—at the head of which lie the Horungtinder, of which Skagastölstind is one—is the longest of all. Even when the head of the sea-way is reached one has to travel to get to the mountain. It does not spring right up from the water's edge as does Slogen, the most beautiful peak in Norway. It is not only almost exactly midway between

SKAGASTÖLSTINDER.

(*By permission of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club.*)

the coast and Sweden, but it is well set back from the head of the fiord itself and most inconvenient of access, surrounded on all sides by misleading glaciers which maliciously land you against the wrong side of the mountain. Slingsby approached by the Midt Maradal, with Emmanuel Mohn and Knut Lykken, the guide. Knut, incidentally, was not a guide in the Alpine sense ; he was a hunter, and could undertake only to conduct his party to the base of the mountain, not the summit. He was, however, quite a good cragsman.

The tale of making one's way up an unknown glacier is, in most cases, very similar. One is pretty certain to lose one's way, and to admit it at a later date. One is also pretty certain to lose one's temper and not to admit it. One gets held up at the bergschrund at the base of the rocks. One—are not all these things chronicled *passim* ? Nevertheless this particular expedition did present some unusual features. In the first place, the herr took the lead and did all the hard work. In the second, neither the guide nor Emmanuel Mohn had nails in their boots. " Both my companions, on principle, wore boots which were quite innocent of nails or spikes." " On principle " is illuminating, and is creditable to the veracity if not to the intelligence of the Norsemen. When a man does a thing on principle, he does not talk about it. When a man says he is doing a thing on principle, in nine cases out of ten the implication is that somewhere in his mind there is a lurking doubt as to whether there is not a little pitted speck somewhere in the matter. In this case it was not long before Knut and Mohn were taught by sundry falls that their principle was a rank bad and exceedingly painful one. Their conversion to unprincipled boots was rapid and permanent.

This prejudiced principle fell with cruel incidence on Herr Mohn. Not only did it absolutely inhibit him from attempting

the ascent of a peak on which he had set his heart and the concurrent honour of being the first Norseman to have reached the summit of Skagastölstind, but it exposed him to a most contemptible, if galling, attack from a super-patriot. We all know that brand of super-patriot—the kind of animal who, from his desk, censures an English team for getting out to an express bowler on a caked wicket, when he himself would diverge in the direction of square leg if a slow medium ball came his way. This office rat took Mohn to task because, " inasmuch as he had travelled amongst his own native mountains with a foreigner, he was looked upon as the representative of the Norse nation, and that as he had allowed " (" allowed " is good) " the foreigner to climb such a glorious and renowned mountain as Store Skagastölstind whilst he himself did not do so, the Norse nation suffered in consequence some slight dishonour." This " supreme rubbish " provoked Slingsby to suggest that the scribe should recover the lost honour of Norway by storming the peak himself. The gage was not picked up. Slingsby adds that Emmanuel Mohn did more than any two of his fellow-countrymen to create and foster in the breasts of the youth of Norway the love of mountaineering—and that is that, absolutely and finally.

Somewhere about 1,100 feet below the summit Mohn complained of feeling tired. He wanted a rest, small wonder, and Knut rested with him. Whereupon Slingsby unroped and went on by himself. There might be no time to rest and conquer, so he resolved to conquer first and rest afterwards. He cut his way up a snow-slope of some 600 feet, and then decided to wait for his companions. As things turned out he might just as well have gone on, but he was unquestionably right in his decision.

Skagastölstind is not a solitary peak. It is a ridge, and

nearly resembles the Meije in general construction, albeit the Meije is of such magnitude as to be dignified by the title of range. There are three Meijes and three Skagastölstinds, sharp elevations on a long ridge, terminating in a mighty sugar-loaf peak—the Meije Occidentale and Store Skagastölstind. There is this difference, that if the butt end of the Meije were as steep as that of the Norse mountain, no ascent would ever have been or would ever be made from the Promontoire hut. The Norse peaks are named Melemste Skagastölstind, Vesle Skagastölstind, and Store (great) Skagastölstind. Slingsby's objective was the ridge or gap, the Brêche, in fact, between Vesle and Store Skagastölstind, now honourably known as Mohn's Skar.

From the Skar the summit rose defiantly, and Slingsby admits that he felt he was beaten, as it was "difficult to imagine any mountain presenting a more impracticable appearance." The final peak may, indeed, be at first sight mistaken for a true cone. As a matter of fact it is a wedge, somewhat resembling the end of one of those wedge-cut posts that are shaped with an axe and stuck in the ground to indicate the boundary of school sports, or tracks across moors, and so forth. Stand one of these posts on its base with the wedge in the air, and you have quite a reasonable image, very much in miniature, of Store Skagastölstind. Moreover, there appeared to be no connecting link between Skar and peak. Slingsby was thinking of keeping himself warm by climbing the Vesle Skagastölstind whilst his companions came up, if they did come at all; but he had barely started when they arrived, much to their credit, despite their nailless shoes.

They held a council of war. Slingsby was all eagerness for an attempt. The opposition numbered two to one, and was distinctly discouraging. Mohn said, "Well, I suppose we can

now say it is perfectly impossible." Knut was more curt. "No," was his reply, "I shall not risk my life there."

Discouraging but providential. Had one gone with Slingsby in his nailless boots, it is difficult to believe that he would not have slipped, which would have been desperately dangerous; if both had gone, and the last man had come off, he would certainly have pulled off No. 2, and that Slingsby could have held both is unthinkable.

Skagastölstind proved kinder than it looked. The tilt of the mountain was in the climber's favour. Each ledge, foothold or handhold sloped inwards; the outer edge was higher than the inner (see pages 37, 38). This great advantage was, however, largely counteracted by the ledges being filled with ice, which ice had to be chipped away or otherwise cleared off before advance was feasible. Slingsby is as wise a man as he is fine mountaineer, and he declines to give details lest he should be accused of exaggeration or foolhardiness "by readers unaccustomed to Alpine work," which is polite English for people who don't know what they are talking about and yet will talk. Three times he was nearly beaten on the way up, and once again by a notch in the ridge that led to the summit, which, of course, was away at the end most remote from the Skar.

After which he came down alone. The wise man does not give any details here either. Probably it was at least as difficult and assuredly much more nerve-trying than the ascent.

Store Skagastölstind has been, as stated, climbed often since, several times single-handed. That does not diminish the excellence of Cecil Slingsby's exploit in the least. He gave the impetus. It is rather amusing idly to speculate when it would have been first climbed had he not shown the way, and, in any case, whether it would have been climbed single-handed at all.

THE GRANDES JORASSES

ON June 24, 1865, the gentleman who was "always attempting the impossible"—and frequently succeeding—one Edward Whymper, attacked and conquered the Grandes Jorasses. More, he insulted them. He never regarded them as impossible. He was merely using them as an observation-post from which to survey a genuine "impossible"—the Aiguille Verte, which he captured by storm, much to the exasperation of the Chamonix guides, two years later. He did not even bother to go up to the highest peak of the Jorasses, which fell to Horace Walker five years afterwards. This being the case, it is not surprising that the outraged mountain retaliated, and that Whymper and his guides, Michel Croz, Christian Almer, and Franz Biener were within an ace—that is, five seconds—of being wiped out on the return journey. Still, there was no real reason why the Jorasses should have been so vicious. They had not been climbed clean, but turned and taken in reverse. Whymper's ascent had been like the "intelligent fly" of mathematical propositions getting from a man's shoulder on to the top of his head, instead of, like a good and true sportsman, starting from his toe and forcing a way up his shin, and so on. The Jorasses were to baffle many parties as strong and stronger than Whymper's.

With the development of mountaineering craft it was inevitable that such assault should follow. It was made and

repulsed, renewed by the picked troops of the enemy, only again to be foiled. The hardiest of the assailants never succeeded in getting more than about knee high. The impossible in appearance proved impossible in fact. Still there was yet a chance of achievement. It was conceivable that examination from above might divulge a way up invisible from below. Determined climbers followed in the steps of Whymper and Walker, scaled the giant's head, and thence descended his furrowed brow and got about as far as his mighty chest. There the " Hitherto shalt thou come " was written in letters of rock and ice, and the attackers had to scramble back to the summit by the way they had come, and return by the way they had come to the base—no light task. It thus became evident that if one wanted to pay a visit to the Grandes Jorasses and put in a bit of time on the face, it was less trouble and about as good sport, so far as the face was concerned, to start from the base. One got in about as much work without all the exertion of having to ascend and descend some 2,000 feet extra, without getting any forrarder so far as the conquest of the precipice was concerned.

The Grandes Jorasses are simply a great headland of crag, an outstanding buttress of Mont Blanc itself. Towards the parent mountain it falls back somewhat steeply, and then loses itself in the vast snowfields which lead up to the great white dome. On the other side it drops for some 2,500 feet with extraordinary steepness in the direction of the Col des Hirondelles.

Far above the snow-line the Col des Hirondelles—the Pass of the Swallows, those sunny birds who bring in springtime and carry away summer on their wings—seems singularly misnamed, yet its title has a very real and very sad appropriateness. " As we began to climb the snow-slopes," wrote the late Sir Leslie Stephens, " we observed, a little distance ahead,

certain mysterious objects arranged with curious symmetry in a circle upon the glacier. Some twenty black spots lay absolutely motionless before us, and as we approached we became aware of their nature, and not, as I will venture to add, without a certain feeling of sadness. In fact, we had before us a proof of the terrible power with which tempests rage in these upper regions. The twenty objects were corpses—not human corpses, which, indeed, in a sense would have been less surprising. . . . The poor little bodies which lay before us were the mortal remains of swallows. How it came to pass that that little company had been struck down so suddenly as their position seemed to indicate gave matter for reflection. Ten minutes' flight with those strong wings would have brought them to the shelter of the Chamonix forests, or have taken them across the mountain to the congenial climate of Italy. Whether the birds had gathered together for warmth, or been stupefied so suddenly by the blasts as to be slain at once in a body, there they were, united in death, and looking, I confess, strangely pathetic in the midst of the snowy wilderness."

In the panoramic views of Mont Blanc from Chamonix the Jorasses are a conspicuous object, not only because they are the second highest point in the range, 13,800 feet, but on account of the remarkable abruptness of their outline. In the coloured prints, on the left (true right) of the picture a long stream of blue white glacier runs down between embankments of rich umber rocks. At the head of this glacier, the Mer de Glace, is a snowy col, the Col des Hirondelles, and on the right (true left) of this the Grandes Jorasses rise almost vertically.

That G. W. Young and H. O. Jones should have disregarded the challenge of this defiant precipice is unthinkable. They were in the heyday of their powers and at the top of their form. Moreover, the sun-god was with them. His un-

relenting shafts pierced the weak places in the giant's armour. Ice-filled fissures became useful cracks ; rocks which had not seen the light for years stood out stark and bare. For many seasons and "'twixt seasons," in common with other good men and true, those two had planned the attack. Jones had made reconnaissances on an unprecedented scale. Young had also been busy over the same line of country. At length came the hour of assault. They carried out to perfection, or thereabouts, the strategy initiated by Wellington at Vittoria and revived by Von Moltke at Sadowa, of marching separately and attacking simultaneously. That, it is true, was not their original scheme. That was to attack separately and triumph simultaneously, to join hands on the field of victory, after the manner of old Emperor Bill and his son Frederick the Noble, removed by death all too early to make room for William the Ignoble.

Failing this, because it was impossible—the Grandes Jorasses are impregnable to direct frontal attack, and nothing short of an earthquake will make them anything else—it remained to ascertain whether the descent, which had baffled previous flanking parties, was feasible.

As a rule it is easier to descend rocks than to ascend them. All long and steep descents, however, possess one common, exasperating feature. Generally speaking, the proposition is to reach the base as quickly as possible, consistently with arriving uninjured. Where the going is difficult, one descends —slowly, but still one descends. Strangely enough, the much-desired base descends likewise. One never gets nearer the bottom till within a few hundred feet of it. Otherwise, stumble, slither, and curse as one will, one seems to get no forrarder. Whether the eye does or does not accustom itself to its slowly changing range is of no practical importance.

THE GRANDES JORASSES FROM THE ITALIAN SIDE.
(*Photo, Alfred Holmes.*)

The plug down, and down, and down, is supremely irritating in any case. What the feelings of climbers are when faced by a series of overhangs only those climbers know. They are descending a face some 2,500 feet high, to the pass or glacier at its base. With much toil and risk they reach the first overhang, 300 feet down. They peer cautiously over its edge and look down. The base ought to be some 300 feet nearer than heretofore. It is not. It remains at precisely the same disheartening depth below, or, to the disappointed eye, even farther off. They scramble down another 300 feet to the next overhang, study to preserve their balance, crane over the edge, and observe that the base is every whit as distant as before. After two or three experiments of this sort mankind is apt to speak in monosyllables. The first 600 feet of the descent took an hour, the next 1,100 to the impasse on the ascent about four hours, and the distance down to the Col des Hirondelles assuredly remained unaltered most of the way.

It was rather a nightmare business that down, down, down, and never getting nearer the bottom. Also there was another consideration. If the impasse were impracticable from above, as it had proved from below, they would be confronted by that 1,700 feet of precipice, which had occupied five hours' skilled and strenuous labour to come down. Moreover, as already stated, descent is generally easier than ascent. That was, in fact, the proposition they were out to put to the test. There was then a possibility that they might not be able to get back at all, and might find themselves pounded on that relentless rock-face. One may often, with safety, slither down a short slab of crag, but it is quite impossible to slither up. Again, the last man may lower the man in front of him down some 30 feet or more, and, by looping the rope over a convenient

projection, follow on a doubled rope ; but the leader cannot lasso an unseen spike 30 feet above his head. Even if he could, it would be a severe test to pull himself up to a safe stance, more especially after five hours' hard work on the descent, to say nothing of the preliminary ascent of the Grandes Jorasses in reverse—a considerable expedition in itself.

At length the crux was reached. But for previous reconnaissance the party would have had to submit to defeat, might perhaps have met with disaster. " Our front man was frankly despairing, and even the rearguard " (Joseph Knubel, no less) " chewed its cheeks in silence." Thorough and conscientious scouting, however, never did betray the heart that loved it. The route downwards was identified. It was quite as bad as it had looked from below, and a great deal worse. Then " Jones and I unroped, ate bonbons from green and pink paper, while the guides faded away down the trough."

Whilst the two amateurs were enjoying this pretty picnic in this delectable situation, Knubel and Laurent Croux, the guides, had crept down over the edge of nothing, and, balancing on next to nothing, had driven two pitons into some crack in the rocks, with the pious hope that they would stick where hammered. A piton, it may be explained, is a strong wrought-iron spike, with the head bent over so as to form a loop large enough for a rope to pass through. As soon as these were secured, Croux was deputed to lead the descent.

The linking up of the ascent and descent was, for the leader, a remarkable feat. It was not exactly child's play for those who had to follow—not the kind of entertainment one would commend to one's best friend, or, if afflicted with a conscience, suggest to one's worst enemy. It was something on these lines—as if the " intelligent " fly, with inefficient suckers, were set to descend an attic ceiling by a crack in the

plaster and, the vertical wall once reached, continued at a slant by another crack to the window-sill. True it is that the human being was safeguarded by a rope, hove through the twin pitons, but that would not prevent him falling off; it would only prevent him falling off with a bump. He would swing clear of the rocks over illimitable profundity, terminating where the glacier abutted on the precipice, or, quite possibly, where the glacier normally approximated to abutting on the precipice. In ordinary every year conditions there is generally a gape between the glacier and the rocks, known as a "bergschrund," but in that season of seasons glaciers had so contracted as to leave nothing but gape, with the ice unconscionably out of reach. It was a pretty bad business for those who had to follow, but at any rate they would have somebody below to help them. In their position above it is questionable whether they could have rendered any efficient assistance whatever.

Laurent Croux did not swing out; neither, happily, did any of the others. The main difficulty was that the upper portion of the overhanging crack was devoid of holds. There was nothing within its walls to hook on to with finger, knee, or boot-nail. All one could do was to jamb knee and heel, or knee and thigh, or thigh and shoulder, or any and every part that would keep one inside the crack and let "slantindicular" gravity do its best and resist vertical gravity doing its very bad worst. They all arrived (Knubel, as usual, exhibiting how perfectly simple the next-door-to-impossible was) and assembled, "labour accomplished and victory won." They had not only achieved the hitherto impracticable, but were in a position to state from intimate acquaintance that the direct ascent would not go. Half their task accomplished, they took a breather for the night, and then "once more into the breach."

This time they attacked in flank. It was a brilliant piece of mountaineering, but it would be tedious to describe. Suffice it to say that Nos. 1 and 2 of the party started the fun by endeavouring to fall into a crevasse and to end the day before it had well begun. This little incident, for which No. 2 appears to have been more or less responsible, seems to have fired No. 1 into terrier-like resolution and activity. At one point of this ascent the incomparable Lochmatters had turned back. The conditions on that occasion were probably nothing like so favourable, but where the Lochmatters had turned, it required nerve to go on under any conditions. The party, however, were in the mood to win. They tackled the difficulty with as much confidence as if no Lochmatter had ever been near it, and carried it.

> "So they with difficulty and labour hard
> Moved on, with difficulty and labour they,"

to emerge victorious on the summit of their ambitions.

Alas and alas! This is the final exploit of those Dioscuri of the Alps, G. W. Young and H. O. Jones, to be here recorded. A few days later Jones perished on the Mont Rouge de Péteret, and with him his wife and the guide.

What happened is largely conjecture. It is the considered opinion of more than one experienced mountaineer that long immunity from mishap begets a confidence, perhaps unrealized because never conscientiously formulated, that owing to such experience they are immune from the avoidable accidents which now and again befall their less skilled brethren. That such a conception should be formulated, until an abrupt period is put to its existence, is unthinkable, because so doing would reveal to every one who was honest with himself that he had time and again done something he ought not to have done,

and left undone something he ought to have done, and that it was through no fault of his that mischief had not resulted. Sooner or later revelation comes, and, if finality comes not with it, it leaves a convert. Many mishaps occur in easy places; almost every mishap is due to the neglect of one or other well-known rule; this neglect is in more than one case seemingly traceable to this misconception. After all, it is always your neighbour's house which catches fire, never your own—till it does.

Take, for example, the case of Émile Rey. Émile Rey was a guide of the first order. Mummery considered him the very best. Yet died Émile Rey as a fool dieth. With an English climber he had completed the ascent of the Aiguille du Géant. On the way down, as the weather was looking ugly, he decided that it would be preferable to unrope so as to travel faster. This shows the ground was not difficult. Rey then descended a chimney face outwards. This shows the chimney was not difficult. "Close to the foot of this chimney Rey jumped or dropped on to a small shelf of wet rock sloping slightly outwards and covered with small pebbles." It is possible, even probable, that he might have done so ninety-nine times out of a hundred without mishap. It is quite certain that had any one in his charge ventured a like thing, he would have been sharply rebuked. Rey, however, had had years of immunity. What might happen to others could not touch him. Yet he fell 600 feet and was killed on the spot, whereas a few seconds' deliberation would have ensured absolute safety.

With regard to the accident on the Mont Rouge de Péteret, it seems that just before the occurrence a certain Dr. Preuss had unroped and gone ahead. The guide, Truffer, was following up a chimney he had climbed when a handhold gave way and

he fell, carrying with him Mr. and Mrs. Jones, who were roped to him. Truffer's fall does not read like sound mountaineering, though, of course, a handhold will occasionally fail, even after it has been well and truly tested. Then what on earth was Preuss, the least experienced man of the party, doing to unrope and go ahead? About the only result would have been to put him in a good position to send down loose stuff on those below, which was not sound mountaineering either. Whether anything of that sort befell Truffer is unknown, because Dr. Preuss was killed later in the same year, scrambling about by himself—which was not sound mountaineering either. Again, Mr. and Mrs. Jones appear to have been standing about loosely on a ledge below the chimney, and it seems certain that neither the one nor the other took the elementary precaution of securing the safety of the party by belaying the rope—which was not sound mountaineering either. For this last possibly the mistaken conviction of immunity from ordinary mishap was responsible.

THE MEIJE

"THE Matterhorn of the Dauphiny." A proud title this. As hinted elsewhere, there is probably no mountain in the world which impresses itself with such fascination both on the man in the armchair and on the man on the mountain as does the Matterhorn; it photographs well—it can be recognized on sight, from almost any point. It has a fine mouth-filling name—Matterhorn. The French title, Mont Cervin, is also distinctive. It withstood a siege of at least seven years, and amongst its assailants were the Carrels, Whymper, Kennedy, Macdonald, Tyndall, Bennen, and Michel Croz, to say nothing of the remarkable attack by the Parkers. The Matterhorn is a proud peak, and has a right to be so. The question is whether the Meije need be proud of being called the Matterhorn of the Dauphiny.

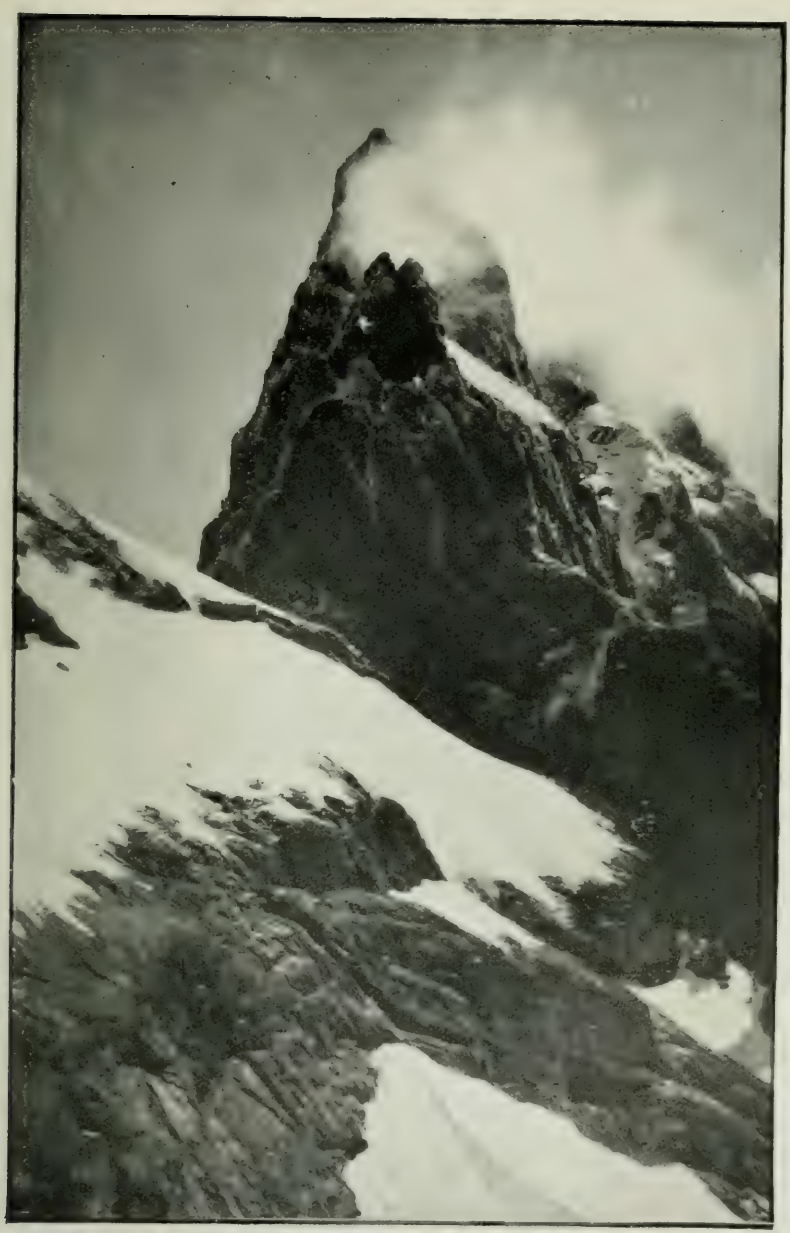
Mountains are beautiful, savage, majestic, cruel, fascinating. They become to their frequenters inspiring friends. Moreover, they possess one admirable quality: they are not touchy. One can say that the Meije is a very fine mountain without the Matterhorn taking umbrage, and *vice versa*. In fact, comparisons are not, or should not be, invidious, though no doubt each mountain has its self-appointed champions.

A reputation is often the outcome of accident, even caprice. Place-names are a snare. This does not refer to British place-names. If they did exist they would be death-traps, but they

do not. According to etymologists they are Latin, or Celtic, or Danish, or Norse, or something. Then comes a bolt from the blue—that we are all British-Israelites. Therefore it is obvious that they are all Hebrew.

In the Alps—that is, in the "horn" section—we only have to deal with German, which is abominably deceitful and lamentably weak in parts. There is some satisfaction to be found in such names as Schrekhorn (the Terror Peak), or Finsteraarhorn (the Peak of the Black Eagle); but what can be done with the Wetterhorn (the Storm Peak)? It might have been worse. It might have been Gewitterhorn, which sounds about as tempestuous as birds on a window-sill. In like manner the Matterhorn disappoints. It signifies the Meadow Peak. Meadow Peak! With Corydon and Phyllis, with ribbons in their hats, piping to lambs which dance in time, also with ribbons.

The Meije has many disadvantages. Its name signifies the Peak of Noon, or rather the Noon, pure and simple; but it is vulgar enough to disguise its derivation under cover of patois—Midi, Meidjo, Meije. This in place of Aiguille du Midi de la Grave. Thus in our north country "the old rat" becomes "t'owd rat," and then "t'owd rotten." Thus Rat Hill might, through the medium of patois, become Rotten Hill, to the utter confusion of etymologists. Moreover, the Meije photographs very badly, and for the most part its 6,000 or 7,000 feet of precipice certainly do not suggest as many hundred, and the Glacier Carré looks like a tablecloth laid out to dry. Even the fine photograph on opposite page is inadequate. It indicates the height but not the mass. In fact, when one comes face to face with the Meije, one cannot see anything else. In that stupendous country it simply overwhelms. Also it did not fall to the first assault, as witness: "In 1864 . . . Whymper



THE MEIJE FROM THE RATEAU.

(*Photo, R. Sara. By permission of M. Pierre Dallos and of the Ski Club of Great Britain.*)

. . . considered the chances of attack too uncertain, and declined the challenge. . . . All the great amateurs of this period paid their homage to the Meije—Coolidge, Taylor, Pendlebury, Cox, Gardiner, Oakley, Maund, Lord Wentworth, G. Devin, H. Cordier, Guillemin, Duhamel, Boileau de Castelnau, etc. *Guides:* Michel Croz, the Almers, Hans and Peter Baumann, J. M. Lochmatter, J. Jaun, J. Carrel, J. J. Maquignaz, Alexander Tournier, H. Devouassoud, Ul. and Ch. Lauener, Spechtenhauser, Andreas Maurer, Melchior Anderegg, Émile Pic, L. and F. Simond, *père* Gaspard."

"The Meije made herself a garland of all these famous names. She was christened 'The Matterhorn of the Dauphiny.' But at last she was forced to yield, on August 16, 1877, to E. Boileau de Castelnau with his two guides, Pierre Gaspard, father and son, of Saint Christophe."

Coolidge, who made the second ascent, does not seem to have thought much of the Meije, ranking it as inferior to the Dent Blanche and Rothhorn. Such an opinion, emanating from such an authority, may seem, on the face of it, incomprehensible, more especially in respect of the Rothhorn. After all, the Zinal *arête*, despite Leslie Stephen's pen and picture, would be rather a rest-cure than otherwise on parts of the ascent of the Meije. The explanation is that the ascent on which Coolidge based his judgment was of the Pic Central, not the Pic Occidental, a very different proposition. Quite recently, on the other hand, a brilliant French amateur was assured that if he had climbed the Meije he could tackle the Z'mutt *arête* of the Matterhorn with confidence.

Now it is quite in order that in every really perfect, satisfactory mountaineering venture some of the party should break their necks. It would be quite admirable if all could do so, were it not for the difficulty of obtaining accurate in-

formation. Failing to achieve the most desirable, it is at least essential that one or more should cheat the coroner by the merest shave, and a good thrilling shave at that. On the other hand, a venture which tackles and overcomes these very dangers and difficulties without mishap under conditions which make the incidence of mishap either more serious or more probable, is liable to be regarded as very flat reading. This estimate is all wrong, discreditable, not as it should be.

In the year 1906 two English gentlemen decided on attempting the traverse of the Meije. This is a serious expedition under good conditions for a strong party. The traverse of a mountain, in climbing parlance, means simply ascending by one side and descending by the other. Thus the ordinary tourist who walks from Patterdale to the top of Helvellyn by Striding or Swirrell Edge, and descends from the summit to Wythburn, makes the traverse of Helvellyn. In 1868 Professor Tyndall, with the guides J. J. and J. P. Maquignaz and three others, made the ascent of the Matterhorn from the Italian side, descending to Zermatt, thus making the first traverse of the mountain—a magnificent performance. Now the traverse of the Meije is a much more serious business. It is a range, not a single peak, and not one of the peaks composing the range can, by any stretch, be termed easy. Naturally the objective of the pioneers was the highest peak, the westernmost—the Grand Pic or the Meije Occidentale. This is a mighty cone of rock, falling precipitously on all sides, and when the top is reached the easiest way off is by the way one came. To continue the traverse one has to drop down the east side to a gap between the Grand Pic and the continuation of the ridge or range. It is far easier to drop down than to climb down, only the first alternative is fatal. Difficulties of this kind are generally negotiated by abseiling, a somewhat

delicate process. Roughly this is the method. A piton or stout wrought-iron spike, with its head bent into a ring, is hammered into a fissure in the rock. Then a loop of rope is passed through the ring and made fast. Then the functional climbing rope is passed through the loop, and the climber descends with its assistance. Of course, if the rope will run through the loop in the piton freely, so much the better, but "so much the better" is an infrequent pleasure. The most comfortable way of descending is on a doubled rope, with one's feet against the rock and one end of the rope round the waist, the necessary slack being released and taken in as one goes down. If this plan is adopted, it is of course essential that the rope should be at least double the length of the height to be descended. The quickest method is to pass the rope under the arm and round the thigh, and so to slither down. This requires a good deal of practice. It may be alleged to be enjoyable when conditions are likewise; when the rope is wet it is not so, when frozen it is curseworthy. After the gap come a couple more Meijes—there are three in all—with a fair sprinkling of intermediate summits. When these have been crossed one gets down to the valley the best way one can. The whole comprises a fairly hefty proposition.

These gentlemen knew what they were about. They were in the very first rank of English climbers, and the standard of rock-climbing in these islands is probably the highest in the world. As the Meije is a rock-mountain, mostly, they could take care of themselves in that department. They could do likewise on ice and snow, as will presently appear.

Also they were professors, two of that notable company which has extended from Tyndall to Norman Collie and his contemporaries, and could easily fill a college. Why professors take so kindly to mountaineering is a disputed question.

One answer is that mountains attract men of the highest intellect. To this proposition the writer enthusiastically subscribes, with a lingering qualm that there may be an exception here and there. The other suggests that their work is so concentrated and exacting that they need as recreation some pastime which will occupy their minds to the exclusion of everything else, and ensure sound sleep at the end. If this be so, this adventurous couple must have been thoroughly satisfied.

A glance at the photograph will show that below the summit cone is a quadrilateral white patch. This really is a considerable ice-field, the Glacier Carré. From the hither side of this a long serpentine ridge (the upper part of which alone is shown in the illustration) descends until it loses itself in the wilderness of snow and ice below. Up this, and along the side of the couloir to the left, lies the route.

This ridge does not run right up to the glacier; it stops short a little distance below it, as did one of the early explorers. Modern parties stop shorter still, because to go on is to risk a head or the rest of one being broken by some falling matter—*e.g.* a bit of rock from the glacier surface, or a spicule, the size of a church spire, from the glacier itself. It is imperative to work away to the left. This is a highly sensational move, because it takes one out on the sheer face of a precipice of an unnecessary number of thousands of feet in depth, and the sense of height becomes unpleasantly insistent.

It has been said that there was no mishap on this expedition. That does not imply that there was no mistake. The first occurred here. The way is intricate. There is one unmistakable landmark, the Pas du Chat, a cleft through and up which you have to wriggle, but that is skyed on the left round a corner—round a gross of corners, in fact. There are

all sorts and conditions of obstacles leading thereto, each of which appears to have a name. Perhaps some day some genius will screw in some brass plates and pointers. Failing these undesirable indices, the partners turned off too early. It will be remembered that a like error of judgment occurred on the Grépon. It is excusable in the first degree. Nothing is much more trying than worrying round corner after corner to find nothing but disappointment, and, if at last you do take the first " blank " thing that looks like going, small blame to you. Nevertheless a little more patience would have saved a lot of hard labour.

They erred in very good company. The famous brothers Pilkington had done much the same thing, only more so, some years previously, and had been put to it to extricate themselves.

As it was, the couple had quite enough of it, especially No. 2. He writes : " I silently blessed the forethought which had led to our ladening our knapsacks with every imaginable kind of necessity and luxury, for I was doomed to carry two bags, weighing about 24 lb., up several hundred feet of overhanging chimneys. . . . I consider this portion about equal in difficulty to the steepest parts of route No. 2, on the eastern buttress of Lliwedd, and considerably more exposed. . . . Laden as I was, it represented the absolute limit of my powers." This implies a very high standard of difficulty, especially in view of the work which had preceded and which remained to be accomplished. In any case, in the earlier days of the present (paternal) generation the eastern buttress of Lliwedd had remained unclimbed and unclimbable for many years.

They had a noble lunch on the Salle à Manger du Glacier Carré, and walked up to the base of the Grand Pic. Hereabouts is the " surprise view " on the Meije. One climbs a

difficult slab, Le Cheval rouge, swings oneself a-straddle with a gasp, and with a greater gasp realizes that one is looking down, straight down, the northern side of the mountain—right on to the roofs of La Grave, 7,000 odd feet below. La Grave is actually distant horizontally from the base of the cliff a great deal more than 7,000 feet, but what it is does not matter: what counts is what it looks.

They scaled the Grand Pic, much behind the clock, and here came the second mistake. They missed the way down. The mistake came near to being a mishap, for No. 2 dropped his axe—which was the mistake—and thereby nearly harpooned No. 1, which would have been a mishap. Still they reached the Brêche Zsigmondy, climbed the Pic Zsigmondy, and all the other points up to the Pic Central, found "to their joy" (this, in view of future revelations, is a mystic saying) a noble staircase of axe-cut steps trending downwards in the desired direction, swept like a leisurely hurricane down the Tabuchet Glacier, which was reckoned impassable that year, bivouacked for the night, and so home in the morning.

Now comes the whimsical part of the business. Evidently the triumphant feature of this fine exploit, according to No. 2, was that only one step was cut during the day. This is what makes the joy at finding ready-made steps on the Pic Central rather difficult to understand.

As a matter of fact, at that time there was war in Olympus. The *casus belli* was crampons. Crampons, it may be explained, are metal frames, garnished with eight to ten long steel spikes, which can be fitted on to the sole of the boot. Pictures were shown of men in crampons walking easily up and down steep ice-slopes, which otherwise would demand the use of an axe for step-cutting, with the attendant expenditure of time and energy. Humorous retaliatory stories were told of crampon-

shod men stepping into marshes and dragging up masses of weeds anchored to their claws, which dank attachment, it being midwinter, immediately froze, hurling their " demd, damp, moist " legs into the snow, where these immediately froze too, and from which they had to be cut out by ice-axes like statues from a block of marble. Then and thus : " Crampons give one frost-bite." " Oh, that is because they are too tightly strapped." " Oh, well, if they are not tightly strapped, they slip and turn at exactly the wrong moment and hurl the unfortunate wearer to sheer destruction," and so on through the whole gamut of the confused noise of the battle of warriors. The echoes of strife have died away, and, though there remains diversity of opinions, there is a general agreement that " claws " are excellent in good conditions on the feet of men who know how to use them, a nuisance to carry, very evil to sit on, and entirely execrable when it comes to giving a head or shoulder to the wearer thereof. This expedition, therefore, was a pæan of triumph for the crampons, with an *andante maestoso* movement down the Pic Central owing to the satisfaction of their wearers on sighting the (?) welcome steps.

On another occasion two foreign climbers made the traverse of the Meije by moonlight, but it is not recorded whether they were wearing claws or not. In any case, it was a notable venture.

Still more notable is the following :

On March 16, 1926, MM. Pierre Dalloz and Daniel Armand-Delille started up the Promontoire *arête*, the serpentine ridge referred to above. This ridge was not then, as it appears in photographs, a rib of black rock. It was " a delicate ridge of snow." Every rock to which moisture could adhere was naturally glazed. The only assistance King Winter gave was the couloir, which was filled with snow, but at the top of

this he had put up some stubborn defences. One by one these were overcome, and at ten the adventurous couple had conquered the *arête*.

The next obstacle was the great wall below the Glacier Carré. It ought to have stopped them. It did not. They worked their way upward "in imminent peril. Enormous stalactites hanging from the Glacier Carré were freed by the force of the sun and fell and burst in fragments on the slopes below." At 2 p.m. the Glacier Carré was reached. A little farther on M. Dalloz had the ill-luck, like No. 2 of the crampon expedition, to drop his axe—a much more serious misfortune in the circumstances, although the French climbers had also provided themselves with "claws." M. Dalloz, however, had come "doubly heeled." He produced a Swiss dagger, which seems to have been quite a good substitute for his axe. On and up they went till they reached the summit at 4.30 p.m.

There was, of course, no thought of making the traverse. The first winter ascent of the Meije is quite enough to satisfy the most ardent mountaineers, more especially as that ascent was made guideless. They just managed to scramble down to a bivouac of sorts above the Pas du Chat before dark.

There they remained on a winter's night, at somewhere about 12,000 feet above sea-level, for fifteen hours. They kept out the cold with hot drinks—tea and soup; but one would have expected them to be a little stale and unenthusiastic in the morning. Not a bit of it. Listen. "The descent of the Grande Muraille, that realm of vertical lines, is one of the most fascinating of climbs. One is haunted by the intense sense of depth below." Can it be that M. Dalloz has any Irish blood in his make-up? They got hung up again by night at the foot of the Grand Couloir, but they reckoned they were too near home to stop. They groped their way down

that ghastly ridge in the dark. Once a rock came away, and with it went the first man, but he was well held by the other. At length, after thirty-eight hours' outing, they reached the Promontoire hut. Next morning they were up bright and early, and "skied" down to La Bérarde in an hour and twenty minutes

AORANGI

"AORANGI or, more properly, Ao-Rangi. The commonly accepted meaning of the term is 'sky-piercer.' . . . One good Maori scholar, whose reputation as such is almost pre-eminent, gives the poetical translation of 'Light of Day'—a singularly beautiful one, for it is the first peak to catch the morning light and the last to show the glow of evening. Another authoritative interpretation is 'Scud Peak,' and this is a singularly apt one, for the prevailing nor'-west winds always cause condensation and gathering of cloud-banners about the higher parts of the mountain."

Yet another and very attractive synonym is "The Finger of Dawn." Other Maori scholars maintain that Aorangi applies to the whole range, which, however, would not disentitle the summit to its peculiar right.

The pity of it is that the accepted geographical name, for which we have no one to thank but ourselves, is Mount Cook. It is rather amusing that in this conflict of terms even the great navigator himself has suffered. A letter was received at the Hermitage addressed to Mrs. X., c/o Thomas Cook, Mount Cook, N.Z. So that the sailor has been confounded with the travel agent.

Now Captain Cook, the navigator, the discoverer of that already much-discovered continent, Australia, was a great

Englishman, one of whose name homeland or colony may well be proud ; but that is no reason why it should be sacrilegiously applied. John Smith the Great was another grand scion of England of whom both the homeland and Virginia may well be proud, but that is no reason why the Shenandoah—"Daughter of the Stars" *—should be rechristened Smith River, or John Smith River, or even Great John Smith River. The Shenandoah remains unsoiled in its original beauty and dignity. Ao-Rangi has become Mount Cook.

The explanation is that the surveyors decided to name the peaks in that part of the range after famous navigators, instead of taking the trouble to hunt out the Maori originals. No doubt some peaks would have required christening, but not all. As it is, the nomenclature is mixed and exasperating. One finds Karangarua next to Lame Ducks Flat, then away to the west a range with an extract-of-beef name—Liebig. Then away up north, Élie de Beaumont, which suggests a fair dame of the days of chivalry, beneath whose bright eyes lances shivered and troubadors sang—but turns out to be a geologist. Then comes Dampier, pirate, buccaneer, naturalist, captain of the navy, circumnavigator and hydrographer, who in all probability supplied, quite unwittingly, the material for *Robinson Crusoe* ; and so on to Haast, Haidinger, Hochstetter, and so forth. One is glad to note, however, a tendency to revert to the original in the case of Mount Cook.

Away to the north, on the verge of this chaos of titles, is a peak bearing the simple English name of Mannering, than which no greater honour could be conferred on any mountain in New Zealand—one might almost add "or elsewhere" without exaggeration.

* Other meanings of Shenandoah are: the river flowing alongside of high hills and mountains; the sprucy stream—*i.e.* the stream flowing past spruce pines.

The explanation of this eulogy is that one day George Edward Mannering took it into his head he would like to climb Aorangi.

George Edward Mannering knew nothing whatever about ice and snow work, and very little about rocks, and Aorangi gives considerably more ice and snow work than the average first-class Swiss peak. It has been authoritatively pronounced to be about equal to the Guggi route up the Jungfrau, one of the grandest ice-expeditions in the Alps. Besides all which there is plenty of steep rock about, and rank bad rock at that in parts. Nevertheless Mannering persisted and, what is more, eventually got to within 150 feet of the top. He was only deprived of the meed of victory by lack of daylight, but we know

> "How far high failure overleaps the bound
> Of low successes."

One of the miracles is that he ever got so far, another is that he was not killed some half-dozen times odd on the way. His chief associate, Mr. M. J. Dixon, who was with him in the last magnificent ascent, also must have possessed a charmed life. As it was, neither broke anything serious or even died of exposure.

Of course all this sounds extravagant and hyperbolical. It is not. It is rather an understatement than otherwise. Admittedly Aorangi is only 12,349 feet in height, and the Jungfrau some 1,300 feet higher, with Mont Blanc overtopping it by over 3,000 feet. Quite! but in dealing with mountains of these dimensions, it is the height of the base from which the climbing begins, not of the summit, that counts. The summit of Aorangi is about 10,000 feet above the Tasman glacier which sweeps its base—just about the same elevation as the summit of Mont Blanc is above Chamonix. It is

always well, when possible, to find examples in the homeland. Snowdon, in Carnarvonshire, stands 3,560 feet in height; Great Gable, in the Lake District, 2,949 feet. But if one ascends Snowdon from Pen-y-Pas and Great Gable from the foot of the Sty, one has to climb farther to reach the summit of the Cumbrian fell. Again, form and structure count for a great deal. Y Tryfan, close to Llyn Ogwen, measures 3,010 feet above sea-level, but its base is 1,000 feet up, which reduces it to a 2,010 feet climb. Still the ascent from the Capel Curig road gives much more work than that of Snowdon from Llanberis. One could take a wheelbarrow, or perambulator as a charitable alternative, up Snowdon that way. The north ridge of the Tryfan is not a route for vehicular traffic.

All these considerations enter into estimating the difficulties of the ascent of Aorangi. For a "difficult" mountain it is not perhaps notable for passages of great severity, but the standard of climbing is high throughout, and that means a great deal. Such "greatly pleasing" items as "Rest after toyle, Port after stormy seas" are rare, whereas "Death after life," which is somehow included in the "greatly pleasing" category, is often unpleasantly near.

In England it is a frequent jest that getting to the foot of the climb is the hardest part of the day's work. In New Zealand, in those days, getting to the foot of Aorangi was a serious expedition. It is not quite a holiday jaunt now, even with improved means of communication and club huts and such accessories. The ascent and descent of the mountain itself is a full day job—sixteen hours is quick time. Like the Swiss and other great snow mountains, the New Zealand Alps produce great glaciers, and the New Zealand Alps do so on a right royal scale. They are near the sea, and they get in all

the work they can in the matter of speed and size within the space available. In Switzerland the glaciers move at a slow and lordly pace. In New Zealand they relatively amble. Relatively only. One cannot see them move, but the angle of inclination suggests, and the general jumble and dislocation of the ice attest, the fact that they are, relatively, ambling along. In the Mer de Glace one has a frozen sea of ice ; in the Haast and Hochstetter ice-falls frozen cascades. They are not small cascades either. The Hochstetter fall is about a mile and a half wide at the top, tapering down to a bare mile at the bottom, and is 4,000 feet high. The Haast is a size larger, but not quite so spectacular.

There are sundry other factors which will become apparent as the siege operations are pushed, but there is one significant fact of immediate interest. Since the date of the first ascent of Aorangi, forty-three years ago, to the time of writing, the mountain has only been climbed to a finish twenty-eight times, and not for want of trying neither. Very few of the very few successful assailants won through at the first essay.

That high-mettled men, ignorant of what they were up against, should essay such a venture is quite in order—ordinary. What is extraordinary, what is heroic, is that, having appreciated to an extent the magnitude of their enterprise, having realized that it was utterly and hopelessly beyond their powers, having read that a strong party, including two noted Alpine guides, had been defeated, and that therefore, as a matter of everyday common sense, success for them was out of the question, they should have returned to the charge time and again.

Teaching themselves in the hard school of experience—Mr. Mannering is of opinion, and probably he is correct, that if they had had the " advantage " of professional assistance

they would not have become such good men—teaching themselves, then, in the hard school of experience, they went on from strength to strength, from height to height. On one occasion, indeed, they had victory almost within their grasp. It was the unkindest cut of all that respect for professional skill snatched it from them. Working up for the Linda Glacier, " on our left we thought that the north-eastern ridge looked practicable, but deemed it better to rely on a route chosen by so able a mountaineer as Ulrich Kaufmann, and kept on our course," and thereby quite possibly lost the mountain. The north-eastern ridge is that by which Zurbriggen reached the summit ; and its upper portion, the rocks which attracted Mannering's notice, form a regular portion of the regulation route by the Linda glacier, which is regarded as the soundest line of ascent.

Before they came to actual grips with the mountain itself the dauntless two—or, on occasions, three—had ample opportunities of holding converse with Nature and seeing her stores unrolled by leaning o'er steeps and foaming floods, crossing the latter by a sort of aerial ferry, being roused up before the morning star to arm against the something or other's opening bite, hacking into their own boots and elbows in attempting to hew their way through scrub. Stay ! That was the performance of another party. If Mannering and Dixon anticipated their achievement, they have maintained a silence, easily intelligible thereanent. One and all, however, are agreed on one point, to wit, that the hardest part of New Zealand rambling and scrambling is concentrated in the " swag."

Swag is an unpleasant term. It suggests burglaries, coppers, narks, fences, and all sorts of underworld things. The New Zealanders have not a good word to say for it, and

the stock of bad words it evokes is endless and unprintable. Yet the New Zealander seems proud of it, and brandishes it in your face with as much unfeeling effrontery as a Welshman does Lloyd George. Judging from photographs, it looks like a mattress rolled up head and tail, and stuffed in an overgrown sack. About a fifth of the way from top and bottom it is bound with a cord by which the bearer is supposed to attach himself—the kind of thing one gives the French clown in a circus to play about with and amuse the audience during intervals between the star acts. Only it appears that in real life it is the swag which does the clowning.

Hear what Mannering has to say on the subject :

" Ah ! good reader, have you ever carried a swag, a *real* swag—not a Swiss knapsack—but a real, torturing, colonial swag ? When you take it up and sling it on your back in the orthodox fashion you remark, ' Yes, I think it *does* weigh fifty pounds.' " (That swags actually do weigh fifty pounds is confirmed by Mr. H. E. L. Porter, *Alpine Journal*, Vol. XXXVI., No. 229.) " In ten minutes your estimate of the weight has doubled. In an hour you begin to wonder why Nature has been so foolish as to make men who carry swags ; bad language seems to slip out ' quite in a casual way,' and you begin to bend forward and do the ' lift.' But the ' lift ' does not seem to fulfil quite all that is said in its praise, for soon the torturing burden settles down again and drags on your shoulders more heavily than ever. After a nice bit of balancing over loose moraine, the swag triumphs. Down you go, and the wretched thing worries you, whilst you bark your fingers and swear horribly, bruising your knees and shins, and cursing the day when you saw the light of a hard and feelingless world. You recover, and repeat the performance as before, and by the time your day's work is done you find to your

demonstrated satisfaction that the burden weighs *at least five hundred pounds*. You sling it off and give it a malicious kick, with the result that you break a thermometer or some such delicate instrument. You try to walk, but stagger about like a drunken man; there is no small to your back, your back tendons are puffy and tired like those of an old horse; your head swims, and your eye is dim. Patience and rest, however, gradually bring you round, and soon you regain strength and spirits in feeling that at least you have conquered a day's difficulties and have brought your board and lodging so far with you."

Yet in Vol. XXIX., No. 207, *Alpine Journal*, you read of a climber, and a member of the Alpine Club at that, complaining that his swag weighed 19 lb. Baby!

In Switzerland it is usual to take a guide; even guideless parties do not consider it *infra dig* to employ porters over at least the early stages of the ascent, but these hardy Southmen scorned such Sybarite weakness. Once they hired a horse as a kind of horse-ferry, and on another occasion a horse and trap. This latter was hardly a success. Up in the bijou, amiable Lake District it is a not infrequent experience to skip lightly from stone to stone across a shallow beck in the morning, and in the evening to find oneself cut off from home and friends and dinner by a raging torrent which one has to wade—always assuming that to attempt to do so is not courting death by drowning. Over here, if a storm puts in an inch of rain, it is the kind of thing one reads about in the papers. Down there a six-inch downpour is not uncommon. The rivers rise from 15 inches to 15 feet of raging, roaring breakers, carrying great blocks of ice on their crests. If one of these storms shows signs of getting to business, it is just as well, and very much better, to find oneself on the civilized side of the river

as soon as possible, otherwise one may be marooned indefinitely. Our adventurers' mishap occurred under more or less normal conditions, nevertheless horse and buggy were swept away, and only rescued from a watery grave by Mannering cutting the horse out—an operation which cost all the blades of one knife. After the horse had been salved uninjured, the buggy was tenderly borne ashore and carefully examined to see whether any bones were broken. It was found that one of the wheels had buckled. Those resourceful New Zealanders soon remedied that. They jumped on it till it was straightened out.

Later on they did employ assistance. First of all they took charge of everything themselves. The nearest accommodation then was the Hermitage, a comfortable hostelry, some six miles from the mouth of the glacier, which is the route of approach. Now there is a Government hut—the Ball Hut—somewhere about half-way, and a *cabane* on the site of Mannering's old bivouac. As it was, all they did was to tramp up some five miles of glacier, carrying their swags, climb up some 4,000 feet of steep mountain-side, carrying their swags, and finally deposit those swags on a rest camp, a ridge of rock running up between two glaciers. That was their idea of getting fit. The first expedition consisted of two men—Mannering and his cousin, C. D. Fox.

They did not get to the top of Aorangi; they did not even get to the foot. Aorangi is set at the elbow of a range running roughly north and south, and rather more than half-way down taking a very slight bend to the west. On that side the base of Aorangi is reasonably accessible, but on the east, the side of the attack, it is defended by mighty bastions and outworks of rock and tremendous glacier-filled moats. "The strength of the defence may be gauged" not only from the list of ascents already given, but from the fact

that Aorangi was only "open" as a practicable mountain three times in the 1923–24 season. This gives some idea of the weather conditions.

The night after their arrival at the bivouac Mannering and Fox were favoured with a fine sample of a mountain storm. The wind threatened to blow the tent to ribbons. "Rain poured down, thunder, lightning, and avalanches all lent their aid, and the elements seemed to be having a generally rowdy time of it. All this, of course, meant snow on the higher peaks" —fresh snow, that is, closing up the route effectually till it got into something like condition. This, of course, choked off the adventurers temporarily, but no sooner did the viciousness of the elements abate than they were up and doing, and before long, equipped with three days' provisions and the unfamiliar ice-axe, they were out for the scalp of the Scud Peak. Soon they did get held up "by a gathering of cloud banners"—in other words, a thick mist; but with its dispersal these intrepid men were off again, apparently on suicide intent. It is perhaps to be accounted fortunate that they got astray through being misled by the map, and were pulled up actually on the first occasion by some rocks, and on the second by the repellent appearance of other crags. Mannering was much disappointed; nevertheless he employed his time well and worthily, exploring glaciers, instructing himself in the management of axe and rope, practising glissading, and altogether qualifying himself as the Compleat Mountaineer.

The next attempt, made in company with M. J. Dixon and C. H. Inglis, was beaten at the start by bad weather; nevertheless, with indomitable grit and endurance, the three pressed on until they had reached the bivouac from which the Rev. W. S. Green, with the guides Boss and Kaufmann, made their attack on the final peak. Such was also the in-

tention of Mannering, Dixon, and Inglis, but they had not realized the possibilities of fresh snow—or quite possibly they had, but refused to believe them and plugged on all the same.

In fact, the weather in the New Zealand Alps seems to be such that no language is sufficiently vituperatious to describe it. Of course geographically one would expect it so, but set against geography one has deceitful lecturers and photographers, and still more deceitful emigration posters. Scientists tell us that the great motor forces of the world move regularly along the lower levels from the Poles to the Equator, returning by a high-level route to the Poles. Hydrography gives one a headache to think of. Moreover, the charts look unpleasantly like those horrid red and blue things one sees in anatomical mending-shop windows. Electricity ascends at the Equator with hideous ruin and combustion amongst the tumult of the thousand and one thunderstorms which dance round the mouths of tropical rivers, to descend peacefully at the Poles amongst the unimaginable glories of the Auroræ. The air also sometimes moves in a hurry, and sets up typhoons and hurricanes and such things, which sink ships and ravage towns, and then go trailing away towards the Poles as cyclonic disturbances, assuming, as they go, the undignified outline of a tadpole. The bulk of the air, however, behaves in less irregular manner. It goes up according to rule, skips a portion of the earth's surface, leaving beneath a belt of calms, and then returns to earth or sea somewhere in the neighbourhood of the fortieth parallel. In the land-laden northern hemisphere the currents are broken up, but in the south there is nothing in the vast expanse of waters to check them, and one catches them good and hard. Now the New Zealand Alps come within the zone of the Roaring Forties, and New Zealand mountaineers get to realize it.

Nevertheless this knowledge, so relentlessly driven home, did not deter Mannering and Dixon from making another essay. This time they were accompanied by Mr. P. H. Johnson and two porters or helpers, Annan and Lowe. With them went a photographer, Mr. Cooper. It is just possible that the inclusion of Mr. Cooper militated against their chance of success, though such a conclusion is inferential. There is not a hint of such a thing in Mannering's narrative.

It was, in fact, just one of those cases in which "thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether they shall both alike be good"—or possibly bad. The scheme was to devote the first few days, as a kind of volunteer staff, to the photographer, taking him to places to which he could not otherwise possibly have gone, and giving him opportunities of photographs he could not otherwise have taken, themselves getting amazingly fit the while by carrying swags and tackling such little tit-bits as Mount de la Bêche, of which they intended to make a dainty mouthful. The alternative to this unselfish proposition was to let the photographer shift for himself and go all out for Aorangi whilst the weather was propitious. The dilemma arose through Dixon knocking up with bad internal trouble and cramps, due either to drinking glacier water or a chill. If the party had made straight for Aorangi and failed through want of condition, of course the reason would have been that they had not taken the trouble to get fit. The alternative proposition is obvious.

There is one unsatisfactory satisfaction of the latter suggestion. They were beaten by Mount de la Bêche, which is not an ascent of the same class as Aorangi. On a later day they lowered its crest, and, indeed, on this occasion they seem to have got at it wrong somehow. Mannering, who was leading, unexpectedly found himself in a position comparable to the

well-known surprise view of the Meije, where you cock your leg over an edge and suddenly find yourself looking down into thousands of feet of nothing at all. Only, instead of being reasonably horizontal, as on the Meije, the edge on De la Bêche was an *arête* at an angle approximating to the severe. On this occasion the cold was so intense " that the steel of one's axe would adhere to one's hand." As Dixon was second, standing like an image and holding the rope during Mannering's ascent, reconnoitring, and very delicate return, this may account for his indisposition.

The attack on De la Bêche throws a pleasing sidelight on the character of the men. They were mountaineers ; Aorangi was an incident—a dominating incident truly, but an incident for all that. Here is another illuminating passage from Mannering's book : " It goes against the grain with Dixon and me to turn back beaten from a peak. Indeed, De la Bêche and Aorangi are the only ones to which we have lowered the colours of our grand old school " (there is a delightful flavour of Tom Brown here), " Christ's College, Grammar School of Christ Church, New Zealand—and the latter we have revenged ourselves upon." Some mountaineers !

Round Four. Mannering came up smiling, his new second, one Arthur Harper, who had spent two seasons in the Swiss Alps, looking confident. It was a thoroughly well-equipped expedition of two, and very well it did until it was first of all betrayed by an " extravagant and erring " swag, which really did show them how to descend some 600 feet of precipitous mountain-side with a minimum of damage (a little volatile vagary which necessitated a rescue-party first and a return to camp later), and then by the weather turning Turk. Also Aorangi had already been proved to be little better than a false knave, and was coming near to be thought so. In non-

Dogberryan language Mannering had already noted the extreme rottenness of the rock, and commented on how one mass of falling crag would dislodge tons of loose material. The i's had been dotted and the t's crossed in more objective manner. Listen! "Coming down, Harper had an almost miraculous escape from swift and certain destruction. We were glissading on a snow slope when a mass of rocks broke suddenly away from above and whizzed down the slopes at a terrific rate, passing within a few inches of Harper." Also when they found an enormous boulder lying right on the top of a rest-camp of an earlier explorer, they came to the conclusion that Aorangi was scarcely the place for a rest-cure. Loose stones and like incidental matter have been pronounced, in the old times before us, an unavoidable danger of the mountains—which is as may be. Certainly it is unconvincing to state flippantly that it is a danger easily avoided by not going where loose stones fall. If this expedient connotes the loss of the mountain, it is hardly likely to commend itself. It was the peril of loose stones which made the Brouillard Ridge reckoned so desperately unassailable till Mr. Young's party outpaced the dawn. It was a case of abandoning the attempt—or the alternative. Mannering chose the alternative.

Eleven months later he was back again, this time with his *fidus Achates*, Dixon. They had "prevented" themselves on this occasion by the inclusion of Annan as a porter (in fact, if not in name), and a base camp being fixed up in advance. Unfortunately the base camp was miserably short "in advance," and Annan struck at 7,000 odd feet. He was, in fact, unaccustomed to such altitudes and such surroundings, and, had he come along, would have been a danger where there was enough and to spare of danger already. Mannering and Dixon went on.

It was just at the start of the attack on the great peak itself

that occurred the pathetic mistake of Mannering's subordinating his own judgment, which had actually detected the true route, to that of the Swiss guide who had preceded him. But for that, there is little doubt that he would have won the summit. As it was, it was a miracle of Providence that he came out alive.

The final assault was within an ace of defeat, final and disastrous, almost before it started. There was a bergschrund to be crossed, as usual, and, as usual, by a snow bridge. Mannering, the lighter man, went first, and delicately achieved. Dixon followed, and went through. It is on such occasions as these that one acutely appreciates the truth of the maxim that whatever number may be right on a rope, two are unquestionably wrong. Indeed, on a level glacier the chances are all against a single man being able to get another out. In this instance Mannering was planted on the slope above the edge of the bergschrund, which gave him some purchase. On the other hand, Dixon's courage and tenacity were enclosed in an earthly tenement of some thirteen stone of bone and gristle, with a super-covering of climbing-kit. Nevertheless the extrication accomplished itself somehow, and business was carried on as before. The exhaustion of nerve and muscle must have been prostrating, but they forgot it—the only thing to be done in such circumstances. Then came what Mannering justly terms "the terrible couloirs." Listen!

"An hour's steady work and we gained the foot of the lowest rocks. . . . We sidled round the base of these rocks to the left, and commenced cutting steps up the first couloir. . . . Ice blocks were continually coming down from the broken masses overhanging the top of the couloir, but luckily none struck us. The descent of an ice block on such steep ice slopes is something to remember. First a rattle above, and then 'swish, swish' as the first leaps begin, followed by a

AORANGI, NORTH FACE, SHOWING N.E. ARÊTE AND "THE TERRIBLE COULOIRS."

(*Photo, H. E. L. Porter.*)

'whirr-r-r' and a 'hum-m-m' as, like a flash of light, a spinning and ricochetting object goes by and is lost to sight.

"We crossed the couloir near its head, partly on ice and partly on rocks, amidst the gravest peril from showers of ice, and took to the rocks on our left, which were both dangerous and difficult, mainly owing to their here and there being coated with ice. Soon they became quite inaccessible, and we were again forced away towards the left on to the ice slopes of the second couloir, and here we found the ice even harder. To add to the difficulty, the angle of ascent became steeper, inclining in places to about 60° from the horizontal.

"We negotiated this couloir in similar manner to that below; . . . to go out into the middle of the couloir was impossible, owing to falling ice. . . . The rocks now shaded us from the sun's rays, and our hats, coats, and the rope were frozen as stiff as boards."

Still they kept on, and actually arrived within 150 feet of the summit. Had Mannering had his way, he would probably have reached the top, in which case it is practically certain that this magnificent chronicle of heroism would never have been written. Fortunately the wiser counsels of Dixon, whose courage was no less unimpeachable than that of his comrade, prevailed. The weather was worsening, and darkness was coming on. Mannering confesses:

"It was imperative that those terrible ice slopes should be descended before the light failed." Again: "Bad as it had been coming up the top couloir, it was infinitely worse going down." Again: "How we did get down without the fatal slip I was momentarily expecting would be made by one or other of us, I never could quite understand."

"How far high failure overleaps the bound
Of low successes."

THE DENT BLANCHE

"TWO days after, when walking in Zermatt, whom should we meet but Kennedy. 'Hullo!' we said. 'We have just seen your cairn on the top of the Dent Blanche.' 'No, you haven't,' he answered very positively. 'What do you mean?' 'Why, that you have not seen my cairn, because I didn't make one.' 'Well, but we saw a cairn.' 'No doubt; it was made by a man who went up the mountain last year with Lauener and Zurfluh.'" (Whymper.)

This passage is instructive. It casts a sidelight on the interesting fact that a great mountain can be ascended for the first time by two several parties on two several days of two several years. Such phenomena are quite common in the matter of our small British climbs, but rare in the Alps. Still, the authority is unimpeachable. Vol. I. of the *Alpine Journal* records the first ascent of the Dent Blanche by T. S. Kennedy and W. Wigram, with the guides J. B. Croz and J. Kronig. C. Wigram was of the party, but, being out of condition, stood out on the way up rather than delay the others. This took place on July 18, 1862. The article on p. 292, *Alpine Journal*, Vol. II., commences: "The idea that it might not be beyond my powers to ascend one of the few still unconquered peaks of Switzerland," records the second first ascent by J. Finlaison, with Christian Lauener and Franz Zurfluh, on September 11, 1864. An editorial footnote would have set

matters right, still Finlaison may fairly be credited with a first ascent, for he was unaware of Kennedy's achievement, and also took a different route.

Somehow, sometimes the Dent Blanche acquires a reputation of being an overrated peak. Some one indeed has written that it has been credited with a somewhat undeserved reputation for danger and difficulty. This is a twice-told tale, and vexing withal. It is also vanity and a great evil. There is nothing new about it, and nothing clever. It is stale and mischievous. Listen to Mummery :

" Well-known climbers, whose opinions necessarily carry the greatest weight, have recently declared their belief that the dangers of mountaineering no longer exist. Skill, knowledge, and text-books have hurled them to the limbo of exploded bogies. I would fain agree with this optimistic conclusion, but I cannot forget that the first guide to whom I was ever roped, and one who possessed—may I say it ?—more knowledge of mountains than is to be found even in the Badminton Library, was none the less killed on the Brouillard Mont Blanc, and his son, more recently, on Koshtantau. The memory of two rollicking parties, comprising seven men, who one day in 1879 were climbing on the west face of the Matterhorn, passes with ghost-like admonition before my mind, and bids me remember that of these seven, Mr. Penhall was killed on the Wetterhorn, Ferdinand Imseng on the Macugnaga Monte Rosa, and Johann Petrus on the Fresnay Mont Blanc. To say that any single one of these men was less careful and competent, or had less knowledge of all that pertains to the climber's craft than we who yet survive, is obviously and patently absurd." Mummery himself met his death on Nanga Parbat.

" The bearins of this observation lays in the application

on it "—to wit, that to say that any single one of us to-day is more careful and competent, or has more knowledge of all that pertains to the climber's craft than Penhall, Imseng, Mummery, and such men, is obviously and patently absurd.

Before going further. The Dent Blanche is a distinctive mountain. In any Alpine panoramic photograph in which it appears, it can be spotted almost as readily as the Matterhorn. It is a star-y-pointing pyramid, of abnormally high angle, and from some points of view shows as if slightly tilted—a sure sign of great steepness. One side of this pyramid appears to have been shorn away, and this appearance comes near to fact. Of course, no one can have anything but a very one-sided idea of a mountain from a one-sided view. A very short distance along the line of the compass one way or the other reveals often an incredibly different aspect. Suffice it, then, that the Dent Blanche is a lofty, peaked mountain, very steep and very rotten. Generally speaking the great Swiss peaks are rotten, but the Dent Blanche is rottener. "The summit," according to Finlaison, "is a long ridge of snow not two inches broad at the top"—*i.e.* no broader than the blade of an ice-axe, which may be construed as very narrow. The climbing is steep and continuously difficult. "We," writes Whymper, "during the next eleven hours, halted only five-and-forty minutes. The whole of the remainder of the time was occupied in ascending and descending the 2,400 feet which compose this south-western face; and inasmuch as 1,000 feet per hour (taking the mean of ascent and descent) is an ordinary rate of progression, it is tolerably certain that the Dent Blanche is a mountain of exceptional difficulty."

Again: "The ascent of the mountain is one of the hardest that I have made. There was nothing upon it so difficult as the last 500 feet of the Pointe des Ecrins; but, on the other

hand, there was hardly a step upon it which was positively easy. The whole of the face required actual climbing. There was probably very little difference between the route we took in 1865 and that followed by Mr. Kennedy in 1862." (As a matter of fact, Whymper appears to have followed Finlaison's route.)

The Dent Blanche has been ascended and descended in less than Whymper's time since, but, on the other hand, it must be noted that Whymper's was, so far as he knew, a pioneer climb, and that he was hindered, nay, battered, by execrable weather. Previous acquaintance, or even good, sound instruction, are wonderful factors in the matter of pace.

So much for the difficulty of the ordinary ascents. There are extraordinary ascents, the difficulty of which is not questioned. Of these the best known is the Viereiselgrat (the Four Donkeys Ridge). On one occasion a whole section of the ridge along which a party was traversing crumbled away into the abyss below. Of course the correct thing to write would be that had this occurred a minute sooner or a minute later the whole party would inevitably have perished. As, however, whole parties take more than a minute to cross difficult sections of difficult ridges, this would be incorrect. Had, however, the crash occurred when the party was on that section, they must have perished to a man. This incident reads as if the mountain were really somewhat dangerous.

Kennedy's successful ascent was not at his first attempt. He had attacked the mountain before with the Taugwalders, and it seems tolerably clear that old Peter Taugwalder funked the business pretty badly about an hour from the top. Kennedy took the lead, but in vain. The son sided with the father, and small blame to him. There are few more unpleasant situations than to be in a difficult place tied to a man with the wind up, especially if that man be your father, and you cannot

speak to him exactly as you would like. It will be remembered that Lord Francis Douglas was in some way dissatisfied with old Peter on the fatal descent from the Matterhorn.

The equipment on this expedition reads to us weird and strange. They had stout leathern belts, and to these the rope was made fast at equal intervals. This is remarkable, as it is to be presumed that the art of tying on to a rope was by then understood. If not, it was soon coming to the front; for in the same volume of the *Alpine Journal*, two years later, is a report on ice-axes and ropes, with illustrations of knots. It must be admitted, however, that the Middleman knot, as there depicted, looks like a desperate attempt to fix up a slip-knot on a standing rope. They had alpenstocks, encumbrances which continued to prolong a hardy existence for quite a number of years after ice-axes, with a respectable length of handle, had been introduced. Also, the best man took the lead down on the return journey. Generally speaking, this is bad mountaineering, as explained in the chapter on the Matterhorn. There seems, however, to have been a keen appreciation of the danger of his being peppered with loose stuff through the clumsiness of inexperience in the rear. Still they succeeded, and a right gallant exploit it was, for the weather was terrible. Wigram had lost his hat, and the cold was such that his hair became a mass of icicles. The wind, too, was tremendous. Whymper, as will be seen, has given a fine pen-picture of what the weather on the Dent Blanche can be like.

The second " first " ascent was no less meritorious, making allowances for the composition of the party. Kennedy was quite first-class; the Wigrams were good, but one dropped out; J. B. Croz was very good; Kronig, a lad, was engaged as porter only, albeit he did yeoman service. Finlaison must have been very good; Lauener was very good; Zurfluh

seems to have been one of those temperamental men who, off his day, is inadequate ; on his day, as good as most and a little better. He was " on his day." Finlaison's was the stronger party both in actual strength and, owing to fewer numbers, capacity for speed. They were also " favoured " by weather a trifle less detestable—" fog and blinding snow," and so forth. Still it was a great performance and instructive withal ; also, in one instance, possibly unique.

A cairn was built, as indicated in the opening passage, and built amid conditions of no little danger and difficulty. The special incident is that Zurfluh consecrated the stone, crossing it and himself in devout preparation, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—a storm-beaten altar crowning one of the world's great altar-stairs that slope through darkness up to God.

The next passage is instructive with regard to the alleged exaggeration of the dangerous nature of the mountain. " The rocks were . . . very friable, and kept breaking away under our feet and hands, causing us to slip and stumble in a manner that, when we looked at the formidable inclination, and the stones which we dislodged bounding away for thousands of feet, made us prefer the ice."

The descent, if correctly set down, suggests problems in physics, if not in mathematics. " We always took care, however, in the most critical places, not to let more than one of us be in motion at a time, so that if he fell two were ready to support him—a precaution to which each of us owed his life a dozen times that afternoon." This proposition is reminiscent of the old nursery problem of getting the goat, the wolf, and the cabbage across a river in a boat containing only one passenger without liability for damage. Anyhow it saved, by simple arithmetic, the equivalent of thirty-six lives that afternoon.

A quotation from Whymper is permissible :

" We commenced the descent of the face. It was hideous work. The men looked like impersonations of Winter, with their hair all frosted and their beards matted with ice. My hands were numbed—dead. I begged the others to stop. '*We cannot afford to stop ; we must continue to move*,' was their reply. They were right ; to stop was to be entirely frozen. So we went down, gripping rocks varnished with ice, which pulled the skin from the fingers. Gloves were useless ; they became iced too, and the batons slid through them as slippery as eels. The iron of the axes stuck to the fingers—it felt red-hot ; but it was useless to shrink : the rocks and the axes had to be firmly grasped—no faltering would do here." A little further on : " We should have been benighted upon the face, where there was not a single spot upon which it was possible to sit ; and if that had happened, I do not think that one would have survived to tell the tale."

The ill-repute of the mountain amongst the inhabitants around its base was on one occasion rather humorously exemplified. A strong, guideless party had the ill-luck to get benighted on a descent. They had been last seen by watching eyes a short distance above a spot which had aforetime been the scene of a terrible accident. Then darkness fell, and they were shut out from sight.

> " Night wanes. The vapours round the mountains curl'd
> Melt into morn, and light awakes the world."

It also awoke the hardy peasants in the village, who promptly bestirred themselves to organize a rescue-party. Those on the mountain it did not wake, for the very good reason that they had not gone to sleep. Slumber on mountain-sides on which one cannot find sitting-room is not conducive to health.

THE DENT BLANCHE.
(*Photo. B. R. Goodfellow.*)

They had had some standing room; that was why they had pulled up short of the danger spot. Morn gladdened their eyes, and must also have tickled their risible faculties. There below them were the rescue-party, but, instead of making for the mountain to bring succour to the living, they were going straight for the spot on which the former party had fallen, to pick up the pieces. Still, it does seem as if people who might be supposed to know more than most about the Dent Blanche really did consider it a dangerous mountain.

For the present generation—or rather, alas! the pen is compelled to write, for the fathers of the present generation—the Dent Blanche must always be associated with the dreadful accident on that black Monday of 1899, wherein O. G. Jones, together with three guides, lost his life; for all generations, so long as English courage, endurance, and indomitable resolution are honoured amongst our people, with Hill's magnificent fight for life. It is a tale which should move the heart of every Briton worthy the name more than with a trumpet.

Owen Glynn Jones was a very fascinating personality. It was not because he was, perhaps, the finest rock-climber in the United Kingdom; it was not that he was compact of whipcord, muscle, and energy. It was that in him sparkled the right Promethean fire, living in himself and imparting life to others:

> "He had strength and endurance for two,
> And spirit and mettle for twenty."

He was all enthusiasm, and his enthusiasm was infectious. He was no less thorough than enthusiastic. It has been written of him that, after the manner of the Athenians of old, he treated his body as if it had been the body of another person, so as to make it as fit as fit could be. It is tolerably certain that if that other person had been anybody but O. G., he

would have gone on strike in nine cases out of ten. Nevertheless he got his reward. He could start a climbing holiday as fit and fitter than most ordinary mortals were at the end. British rock-climbing owes him an immense debt. That there was good climbing to be had in the Lake District, and elsewhere, had been known to a select few for a good many years. O. G. Jones's *Rock Climbing in the English Lake District*, enriched by the photographs of the Abrahams of Keswick, opened a new world to enterprising Young England. Whether it was entirely palatable is questionable. There existed at some unnameable time a curmudgeon class of climbers who seemed to think they had a prescriptive right to the crags, and that all others were trespassers. It is to be hoped that they are all either dead and buried, or converted. If not, they ought to be. O. G. Jones, on the other hand, was of opinion that every man ought to climb, and would be all the better for it. This alternative is the more appalling. Still, if Jones could see the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District to-day he would not be dissatisfied with this partial realization of his conception.

He revelled in difficulties. In fact, it must be admitted that he was prone to carry this proclivity somewhat too far. Walker's Gully on Pillar Fell is a climb to extend a very good man under good conditions. Jones tackled it when sheathed in ice. He got up, but—— Of course, in those days winter climbing in the homeland, as a kind of kindergarten for the great peaks, was the fashion. We read of a climber, well secured by the rope let it be said, standing with one toe on an icy wall and the other stuck in a step cut in an icicle, whilst the leader climbed over his shoulders. All these exploits were done on quite short climbs, and are generally inapplicable to the ascent of great mountains. They are not conducive to safe conduct.

Of the accident itself it is painful to write. Here is a summary in the words of Mr. C. E. Mathews, one of the founders and presidents of the Alpine Club and first president of the Climbers' Club : " Here was a party of five persons attempting a difficult couloir on the most difficult ridge of the most dangerous " (this expression of opinion from Mathews is noteworthy) " mountain in the Alps. In a critical position in this couloir, where there was hardly any foothold, the leading guide advances a few steps to reconnoitre. He finds the route impracticable. Two men of the party hold an axe to enable him to stand on the blade, the remaining two being on the same rope at a distance of 25 or 30 feet. The leader slips ; of course he falls on the two men just underneath him, who then had no chance. The fourth man was dragged down also, and, but for the fact of the breaking of the rope, the fifth man would have shared the same fate."

It was mad mountaineering, if it can be called mountaineering at all. The absolutely reckless disregard of every rule of the game is amazing. It was shockingly bad guiding. This is in detail what happened :

The party consisted of Furrer and Zurbriggen (guides), O. G. Jones, Vuignier (guide), and F. W. Hill in the order named. The ascent was being made by the western *arête* from the Bricolla Alp. They seemed to have travelled fast and easily, considering the nature of the climb, till they came to the difficulty referred to by Mathews. Furrer essayed to climb it—it was of no great height—but found it too much for him. Zurbriggen thereupon came to his help, and offered the head of his ice-axe as a foothold. This would have been quite in order had Zurbriggen been secured and in a position to field Furrer in case of a slip. As it was, it is clear that he was neither the one nor the other. Furrer's pressure on the axe-

head was such that Zurbriggen was unable to steady it sufficiently, and Jones was thereupon called in to help. This was madness. It is difficult to see quite how Jones could have refused, but there are undoubtedly plenty of men of unquestioned courage who would have declined point-blank. Jones, however, was not of that mettle.

This, then, is the position. Two men standing on a ledge, in no way secured by belay or threading of the rope, balancing a third man against a difficult wall on the blade of an axe. Between them is any amount of slack rope—whether 20 or 50 feet makes not a scrap of difference—the sudden straightening out of any length of which would result in a jerk that would pull a man off good holds ; and if one went, all went. Some distance away was Vuignier, how placed is not very certain, and again behind him Hill on indifferent hand- and foot-holds.

At first it seemed as if Furrer would succeed, but just as he was pulling over the edge his fingers slipped, and he came back on his supporters, knocking them both over. Similarly situated, the same thing would have happened had he fallen on their heads off a haystack in a hayfield. To field him, they would have had to step back, and there was nothing to step back on. They had "no chance." They fell, clean. Hill, clinging desperately to the crags, heard Vuignier go, and braced himself hopelessly to resist a shock he knew must be irresistible. He came back to life to find himself still clinging on hard, with a few feet of rope hanging from his waist.

This is curious. He saw Furrer fall, and remarks that he seemed to fall very slowly. Exactly the same comment was made by two witnesses of a recent fatal accident. "He seemed to fall very slowly." Probably the intense concentration of the mind clogs the passing of the fractions of seconds.

Hill saw all the first three fall—and saw them strike. He thinks they were killed at once, for they made no movement to save themselves. Vuignier he did not see fall. It is curious.

Vuignier he did not see fall, and so cannot tell how he came to be left with those few feet of rope which were to prove his salvation when there was, quite literally, only a step between him and death. Whether the rope caught on a projection whilst Vuignier was falling, or whether Vuignier had hitched it between himself and Hill is not known. If the latter, it was the only bit of sound mountaineering in the last scene. If so, too, it availed Vuignier nothing. An Alpine rope is tested to stand a dead weight of 2,000 pounds, or a jerk of 10 stone dropping 12 feet. Here we have a weight of three men—with impedimenta—something like 40 stone falling much more than 12 feet.

Then ensued a struggle to which—albeit the wrestle was not against flesh and blood, the contest in no great cause, though its motive was not self-sacrifice but self-preservation—the term heroic may be applied without fear of the stigma of hyperbole. Many men would have been unnerved by the shock to the verge of paralysis, trembling and incapable of movement, as in the case of the Taugwalders on the Matterhorn. Hill must have kept his head from the very first.

His first business was to extricate himself from his present impossible position. This done, he proceeded to work round the point of disaster, for, alas and alas! the accident seems to have taken place on a " stunt " variation of the true route, and then struck up the *arête* for the summit. There was another party on the mountain, and during the ascent he heard a cooey from above. To him it must have seemed the voice of an angel of hope. He cooeyed back. There was no answer. Indeed it is probable that the call he heard was just

an exuberant farewell to the peak. The accident had taken place at 10 a.m., and it is fair to assume that, with all his nerve and resolution, Hill had not been in condition to start uphill at once after reaching a point of relative safety. Moreover, his own call would have been thrown back from the rocks and right away from the summit.

He pressed on, but his progress must have been necessarily slow. On tolerably easy ground a single man will travel much faster than two, but this was not tolerably easy ground. It was on "the most difficult ridge of the most dangerous mountain in the Alps." Above and below were the insensate rocks watching, watching relentlessly for the slightest slip, the least momentary failure of nerve or muscle, and on either side an intolerable sense of depth. That lonely figure on that lonely mountain-side would be a fitting subject for the brush of some great artist. Only, only, that artist must be a mountaineer, and sufficiently great to refrain from being artistic—that is, to restrain himself from putting in some fool touches of his own, *e.g.*:

> "The haggard eye
> Cast heavenward for some symbol of respite
> From the intolerable anguish,"

because a climber in that situation would have quite enough to do in such a situation to look after his hands and feet.

Hill reached the summit and crossed it. Then, seeing no sign of the party he had heard, he descended, utilizing the steps they had cut. It is quite possible that he might have won through in that day, but at about two o'clock in the afternoon bad weather and mist came on. Some indications of what bad weather on the Dent Blanche means have been given.

It was a cruel happening, enough to take the heart out of the most resolute. Hill does not seem to have got flustered.

He selected a cleft in the lowest gendarme, jammed himself into it, belayed the rope, fixed his axe across him, fastened it firmly to prevent his falling out, and went to sleep. When he awoke it was night, and by the light of the stars he could see that his boots and legs were covered with new-fallen snow.

That must have chilled even his courage. He had been relying on the tracks of the former party to guide him off the mountain, and the chances were that those tracks would be obliterated. Generally speaking, it is easier to come down mountains and rocks than to ascend. On the other hand, it is far easier to find the top of a mountain than the way off it. People do not usually get lost on ascents. All they have to do is to keep on mounting till they reach the summit. Coming down is quite a different business unless you are quite sure of the route. One cannot see where one is going. Turning the wrong side of a wretched little drop no higher than a house may send one an hour and more out of one's way.

For twenty-two hours—for twenty-two hours was Hill marooned on that gendarme. When conditions permitted moving, he found, as anticipated, that the snow had largely obliterated the tracks which were to be his salvation. Moreover, nature was becoming enfeebled to the point of exhaustion. He reached the Wandfluh ridge to the south of the mountain. Technically the easiest, it proved the most trying part of that dreadful experience. Try as he would, he could not hit off the way down. The poor, confused brain could not correlate the landmarks. Once he dropped his axe, his sole anchor of hope. It took him a perilous hour to recover it. At length, some time on the Tuesday afternoon, he succeeded in working his way down to the comparative safety of the Schönbuhl glacier. Thenceforward his travail was one nightmare, guided half consciously by the indomitable will. His mind began to

wander. He pressed on, calling to his comrades to follow. Then he would collapse into the sleep of exhaustion, only to rouse himself and struggle on again. On Wednesday he reached a beer-house near the Staffel Alp, and between 11.30 and noon stumbled into the Monte Rosa Hotel, fifty hours after the accident.

Now to set down perhaps the most amazing feature of this amazing adventure. His sustenance during that terrible period had been five raisins, about one raisin to every ten hours. It sounds incredible, but it is a fact.

It has been more than once noted in this volume how frequently the homeland furnishes replicas of great mountain form and great mountain adventure. Listen.

"On May 17, 1908, Baron von Hahn set out from Pen-y-Gwryd" (North Wales) "to ascend the Glyder Fawr, and reached, in a mist, what he took to be its summit. It is practically certain that he was, in reality, not far distant, on Castell y Gwynt, when a rock he had touched came down, causing him to fall and fracture his leg. There he remained for the night, vainly expecting to be rescued. When daylight broke, he fashioned a splint from his walking-stick, reserving the crook to aid his descent. The whole day was employed in working slowly and painfully downwards in a recumbent posture, his only food being a morsel of chocolate. A second night was spent without victuals on the mountain-side. On the morning of the third day his shouts were answered by the barking of dogs, which had the effect of stirring inmates of the hotel to activity. He had almost completed the descent, being near the stone wall, when help at length was brought."

As an instance of pluck and perseverance this adventure also merits honourable mention.

EVEREST

"I barred my gates with iron; I shuttered my doors with flame,
Because to force my ramparts their '*puny climbers*' came;
I took the sun from their presence; I cut them down with my blast,
And they died——"

I

BUT it may be done—and England should do it. The earnest of success has been stamped with the threefold cachet of endeavour, disappointment, and disaster. "If blood be the price, Lord God, we ha' paid it fair."

That Everest is the highest mountain in the world is kindergarten knowledge. What is not generally known, still less appreciated, is the scale of the country. In the Himalaya, besides Everest, there are seventy-four peaks of over 24,000 feet, and not one of these has been climbed to the summit. Comparisons in the homeland are impossible to seek. The height of Everest is 29,002 feet. What impression can this convey to folk to whom a fell 2,900 feet high is a considerable mountain? An American traveller, on first coming face to face with Kanchenjunga, exclaimed, "I don't believe it." That is probably as human and vivid a description of effect as ever found expression. There are big mountains in America too.

The distances are astounding. Here again it is impossible

adequately to indicate scale. Mileage signifies nothing at all, or something very like it. It is quite a short distance from Pall Mall to Piccadilly, just a few minutes' walk. It is an entirely different matter if the route taken is by the faces and roofs of the houses with intervening drops into King Street and Jermyn Street. One exasperated mountaineer, on hearing that it had been reported that his expedition, after visiting K.2, was going to move on to Everest, commented sarcastically, "Across two thousand miles of some of the worst mountains in the world."

Moreover, Everest is only "open" for three weeks in the year. For the remaining forty-nine it is impregnable, unassailable, well-nigh unapproachable. This, with its implications, was one of the most formidable obstacles. The other was the increasing rarity of the air at increasing altitudes.

Climbers had ascended to great heights before, always with ever greater difficulty as they mounted. Whymper, with his usual thoroughness, had experimented in the Andes, and had demonstrated the possibility of acclimatization up to something over 20,000 feet. Both his guides—one was J. A. Carrel, a tough enough proposition—and himself had completely succumbed to mountain sickness at a comparatively low level, but the indisposition had been gradually overcome, and eventually they reached the crest of Chimborazo, 21,000 feet, in tolerable condition. At least it would so appear, for when they attained what they had taken for the true summit, they found they had made a mistake and that it was some distance away—only to be reached by crossing snow of such consistency that any attempt to walk across it was cut short by the pedestrian sinking in over head and ears. Wherefore they lay flat and patted and beat the snow into something like cohesion. Then they crawled forward over the precarious

surface as far as might be, patted and beat again, crawled again, and so on until they won their goal. Then they crawled back and descended. They had to race the last part of the way down. This reads as if they could not have been entirely played out. The practicability, then, of getting acclimatized to great heights had been scientifically established long before the Everest expedition by Whymper and others, but there is a vast difference between 21,000 and even 24,000 and 29,000 feet. The lowest of these is probably about the height which the members of the next expedition will select as a practice ground whereon to settle and get into trim.

Mountain ranges have been crossed, gorges forced, desolate wastes traversed, the terrors of storm and tempest, ice and snow, braved time and again since the days of Alexander and Hannibal and Eric the Red, by conquerors, by colonizers, by explorers. What, then, was the object of the Everest men? Not survey, not geology, not natural history, and so forth. All such purposes, except a snatch or two of geology, could and indeed must have been fulfilled as far as in them lay by the time they had reached the base of the North Col. What, then, was the object of the supreme effort? To get to the top? In a sense. There is undoubtedly a lure of the summit which seems to attract individuals who ought never to be allowed on a mountain at all—witness, *passim*, the litter which defiles the high places of the earth from Helvellyn to Mont Blanc.

Ay! it was the call of the summit indeed—that, and a great deal more. It was the same spirit as that which sent Drake to the ridge of the Darien divide from which he viewed the Pacific, the same spirit, finally, which has made us the "power," in the words of a hostile orator, "which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and

military posts, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England ; " the spirit but for which we should be " but the conscript appanage of a foreign power." Thus out of the nettle danger we pluck the flower safety, though not, thank God, on the safety first principle. It will be an ill day for England when the Everest spirit sags.

The first expedition was in intention a reconnaissance only. Of course if the top could be reached so much the better, but there was no real expectation of achievement. The first thing was to get to the foot of Everest. That was an undertaking to tax the hardiest. Two, in fact, did succumb.

It was composed as follows : Colonel C. K. Howard-Bury, D.S.O., in command ; Major A. T. Morshead and Major E. O. Wheeler (Indian Survey) ; Dr. A. M. Heron (Indian Geological Survey) ; A. F. R. Wollaston (medical officer and naturalist) ; G. L. Mallory, G. Bullock, Dr. Kellas, Harold Raeburn. Of these Dr. Kellas was in no condition to have started. He joined the party a worn-out man after a most exacting time in Sikkim, really unfit for anything but a rest-cure. Nevertheless the brave spirit refused to accept defeat at the very outset of the campaign. First on foot or horse-back, then in a litter, despite illness which in normal circumstances would have sent him to bed, the determined man persevered cheerfully till, quite unexpectedly, the overtaxed heart gave way. It was a disheartening loss. His experience —he had attained unto 23,600 feet—might have been above price. The story of Raeburn is similar, though less tragic in the startling suddenness of the *dénouement*. Recognizing to the full his magnificent skill and vigour, it is questionable whether he was not too old—he was over fifty—to start at all.

It is unquestionable that when he was attacked by dysentery, he should have gone back as soon as he was fit to do so. It is a wretched complaint, most exhausting. Instead, with one servant only, by most extraordinary effort he regained his party, and—killed himself. Death did not come for some years, but the cause and the effect are none the less certain. It was the old story that, when one is on the wrong side of fifty, one does not usually recuperate unless one first gives in.

As a survey the reconnaissance was successful beyond expectation, but surveying was not the primary object. That was—the way up. Mallory discovered the Rongbuk Glacier, a broad highway leading to the North Col, the most practicable seeming starting-place for the ascent. It had been marked down long before. These men had no need to take lessons from the Bespielspitz in Badminton to recognize the best line of attack, and the Rongbuk Glacier led directly to its base. Unhappily the base proved unattainable, and here a digression is permissible with regard to the question as to whether a previous survey should not have been made from the air. In this instance such assuredly would not have helped in the least. It would have been quite impossible to tell from an aeroplane whether the Rongbuk side of the North Col would go or not. One has to get to grips to obtain information of that kind. Moreover, the fury of the tempests and the disconcerting vagaries of the wind when twisted and tortured amongst this labyrinth of summits might—probably would—have been a deadly peril to the airman.

As the Col was apparently a real, genuine pass—that is to say, a depression between two peaks with a descent on either side, it was obviously expedient to find the other side. This was only to be effected by fetching a compass of extraordinary

magnitude, or, in military parlance, turning the flank of the enemy—to wit, the Everest *massif*. After having been misled into the entirely unregrettable mistake of turning left too early up the beautiful Khapa Valley, which appeared to lead directly to the desired point but did not arrive, the explorers struck the true line—up the Kharta Valley and over the H'lakpa La Col, a depression in one of the mighty ridges which radiate from the Everest range down to the East Rongbuk Glacier, right in front of the North Col.

This is a most extraordinary formation. The Col, the visible Col, is part of a real glacier, whether of the main Rongbuk or the East Rongbuk matters not one whit. No doubt, hidden somewhere below the superincumbent mass is a genuine rock-pass, but the Col, as it appears, is simply a vast accumulation of piled-up ice, a genuine glacier section, and, as such, constantly on the move and therefore liable to frequent and sometimes violent change.

Photographs are no help. For the reason just given, a photograph of the North Col may be quite out of date by the time it gets into print in a published volume, even before the time a party which had examined it in England could get to its base. In any case, photographs are frauds—mountain photographs almost as much so as reproductions (?) of fair women. As for mountain scenery, to take the first domestic incident to hand. Looking up the Nant Ffrancon Valley in North Wales from the bridge over the Ogwen, one sees a strath-like valley shut in on either side by bold, even precipitous mountains. Snapshot it, and the resultant picture resembles in outline a splayed out trough. The artist, on the other hand, naturally emphasizes the angles. The lesson is that it is safe to assume that the slope of a mountain in profile is steeper than as shown in a photograph, and

not so steep as depicted by an artist.* In some of the photographs the angle of the mountain from the North Col looks as if one could trundle a wheelbarrow up it. It could not be done.

The pioneers, when they arrived at the base of the North Col, must have realized to the full what they had recognized early—the tremendous power of one of the most formidable of their antagonists. Everest is in the very shrine of eternal snow. All around are mighty peaks sheathed in white armour from base to summit. Everest is a rock mountain, it is true, and that some of its faces should be relatively bare was to be expected. What might not have been anticipated was that such should be the case with the comparatively easy slope up from the North Col. In the photographs it looks as if the rocks had been imperfectly swept with a gigantic besom. That is what had happened. That besom was the wind. Many photographs show the outline of Everest fringed with a white mane. That mane is flying snow. †

Of course, in the full fury and violence of tempest even a familiar Swiss peak would be unassailable. How much more, then, the Giant of the Himalaya ? The Alpine Club required no lesson in that respect. The purpose of the vanguard was to ascertain whether Everest could be attacked with a reasonable chance of success under reasonable conditions—*i.e.* when they could catch the wind napping. This could only be decided from the summit, not the base, of the Col.

The ascent of the North Col was accomplished without serious difficulty. There was some hard step-cutting towards the finish. Of course the climbers were in perils of snow,

* These observations do not apply to Mr. Beetham's photograph. It is needless to add that this does not depict the side of the mountain on which the assault was made.

† See Mr. Beetham's photograph.

but there were no abnormal obstacles. Indeed, had the condition of the Col of 1924 been like that of 1921, it is in a high degree probable that Everest would then have fallen. Once on the crest of the Col, all doubt as to accessibility of Everest vanished. There was no insuperable barrier to the way to the summit. It was, in fact, not a difficult mountain.

It presents one awkward feature which can be recognized in the familiar photograph of Colonel Norton at 28,000 feet. The rocks dip towards the north, and the ascent had to be made against the tilt of the mountain (see Matterhorn, p. 37). The surface of Everest seems to be here built up of a series of overlapping shelves, sloping slightly downwards. These afford not too satisfactory footholds, and much more unsatisfactory handholds, generally, where existent, of the finger-and-thumb class. They are something of a nuisance ascending, more so in descending, as a slip is more likely, and, in case of such, they offer no projections to which you can clutch and stop yourself going—very much more so in traversing, *i.e.* crossing a slope laterally. Still to skilled mountaineers, in first-class fettle, this formation would be no more than a nuisance, rather a serious nuisance at times; to exhausted men it might prove disastrous, and indeed on one occasion came near to being so.

Of the assaulting party three—Howard-Bury, Morshead, and Wollaston—returned to the Base Camp: numbers do not signify greater efficiency and assuredly not greater speed; Mallory, Bullock, and Wheeler remained on the Col to launch the assault with daylight.

It was not to be. The storm fiend lashed himself into fury at the invasion of his domain. High above on the ridge they had marked out for their line of attack the climbers could see the snow being driven up into the air and then blown away

MOUNT EVEREST.
(*Photo, Bentley Beetham.*)

in dust. Had they been on the ridge, the chances are they would themselves have been switched off like bits of paper. One gallant effort they made, and then turned back. It is significant of the conditions that not one of those ardent mountaineers ever regretted so doing. The retreat was not a defeat. Indeed, the reconnaissance had "better bettered expectation."

The words "Base Camp" refer to an unwritten chapter of details which have no place here. Contents: the enrolment of the porters, disciplining them, coaxing them, training them to be mountaineers of adequate efficiency; the commissariat and transport; the fixing of sites for camps, the getting the material to the site, and what not—in fact, the spade-work out there on which the success of the expedition depended, to say nothing of all the planning and preparation at home.

II

In the following year the attack was renewed. This time, with the exception of Mallory and Morshead, the staff was entirely new. General the Hon. C. G. Bruce, C.B., M.V.O., in command; Colonel E. L. Strutt, C.M.G. (Vice-President Alpine Club); G. L. Mallory, G. Finch, Dr. T. H. Somervell, Major E. F. Norton, D.S.O., Dr. A. W. Wakefield, Captain Geoffrey Bruce (Ghurkas), Captain J. C. Morris (Ghurkas), C. G. Crawford, Dr. T. G. Longstaff, Captain J. B. Noel. It had been intended to include both General Bruce and Finch in the first expedition, but circumstances prevented the former, and illness the latter. Somervell had been working as a medical missionary in India, and Wakefield had served with Grenfell of Labrador, a curious combination of two doctors

who had worked in the mission field in widely differing climates. Both also had acquired their climbing education on the Lake District fells. There was another doctor—T. Longstaff, the famous Himalayan explorer. He was in charge of the health of the party, and as he had won his way up to a height of 23,360 feet, he might be expected to know, as well as most men, how to deal with the complaints concomitant with such ventures. To Captain Morris was entrusted the post of transport officer from the Base Camp onwards. Captain Noel was photographer in chief, and succeeded to admiration. It must have been wicked work developing films at an elevation of some 4,000 or 5,000 feet above the top of Mont Blanc, with accommodation about as suited to the purpose as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.

This time it was no launching out into the unknown. The expedition knew exactly what to do and how to do it, where to go and how to get there. So far as the difficulties of travel and transport, snow, rock, and ice were concerned, they as good as had Everest in their pocket. The chief and incalculable obstacles were the weather and the climate. Of the weather something has been said already ; the climate is unspeakable. On these mighty uplands it is incredible, absolutely and entirely mad. Over here you step out of the inconvenient heat of the sun into the shade of a rock, mop your manly brow and cool down contentedly. Out there you step out of the sun into the shade to avoid sunstroke, at the imminent risk of frostbite and pneumonia. Here be some figures taken at a height of 16,500 feet. Maximum temperature of sand in twenty-four hours, 96° ; minimum, 2°—daily range, 94°. Temperature of air, maximum, 55°; minimum, 11°—daily range, 44°. It will readily be appreciated that acclimatization signifies suffering and exhaustion which only the hardiest can

endure, yet those who had been on the Himalaya before were looking forward to the venture—and with eagerness.

In addition to the severity of the climate, there was the problem of the rarefaction of the air. It is desperately trying on the respiration (Cheyne-Stokes breathing is not infrequent), and consequently very exhausting. As a remedy or relief the use of oxygen was submitted to the Everest Committee. The committee did not welcome the proposition, but eventually gave a reluctant consent that a supply should be taken. Their attitude seems to have been something of this sort: "Oh, if we don't consent and the attempt fails, some folk and sundry papers will cry out, 'Oh, if only oxygen had been taken!'" etc. Into the breezes which buzzed and buzz around this much-vexed question it is not proposed to venture. Still, it may be assumed that the opinion of men on the spot is of some value. When Colonel Norton, with Somervell, was returning utterly exhausted from his great ascent of 28,000 feet, he heard a shout that an escort was coming up, bringing an oxygen apparatus and cylinder. His reply is illuminating: "We don't want the d—d oxygen; we want drink!" To palliate the shocking suggestion implied in this very improper demand, let it be stated with express speed that the drink specified was tea—*Gaudeamus igitur!!*

Before plunging into the stress and tumult of the battle, it will be well to turn aside and rest awhile in the Rongbuk Monastery. The Lama there is regarded as the incarnation of the god Chongraysay. He is reputed a very holy man, which, with such, is not uncommon, and merits his reputation, which anywhere, in any community, is rare indeed. There is something affecting in his appeal to General Bruce to be kind to his men—something sweet in his request that the lives of animals should be spared. Wild creatures are tame there.

The fear and the dread of man is not on them. It is an Elysium immune from the curse of Genesis ix. At a later date the porters came there for his blessing before the day of peril. With them came the British, and each of these the Lama touched in benediction with his silver prayer-wheel. It was a beautiful ceremony, and quite right too, whatever self-complacent orthodoxy may say.

If the Lama was a saint, he was also very human. He was most curious to know why our men had come to attempt Mount Everest. General Bruce's reply was tactful to a degree. He explained that there was a sect in England which worshipped mountains, and if reverence, love, and awe be attributes of worship, there was truth no less than tact in the explanation.

The actual field-campaign was limited to the East Rongbuk Glacier. A series of camps, or rather posts, was arranged. No. 1 at an altitude of 17,800 feet; No. 2 at 20,000 feet; No. 3 at 21,000 feet, on the moraine not far from the base of the North Col. The next three camps were to be pitched as follows: No. 4 on the North Col, 23,000 feet; No. 5 at a height of 25,300 feet; No. 6, 27,000 feet up, from which it was hoped the summit might be rushed—a sufficiently formidable task, assuming that all went well.*

All did not go well. In the first place, the North Col was in very much worse condition than in 1921. What had been soft snow had changed to hard ice. The original route had become impracticable. The alternative was to cut steps up ice slopes to the right, whereafter ropes had to be fixed to enable the porters to bring up the camp equipment. This, it would be thought, was an arduous enough job to satisfy most

* The exact elevations were: (1) 17,800; (2) 19,800; (3) 21,200; (4) North Col, 22,700; (5) 25,300; (6) 26,800.

men for some time, but Mallory, from the top of the Col, noticed clouds massing up ominously. He feared these might be the advance guard of the monsoon, and pressed on the work. On 17th May Mallory, Somervell, Norton, and Morshead gathered for the assault. Crawford had been one of the advance guard, but had gone sick, and, much to his disappointment, was compelled to return to the base. On the 20th the assault began in earnest, Morshead leading. The intention was to camp out as high as possible and essay the peak next day. Hereon ensued another pleasing discovery. Owing to the shelving nature of the surface, already alluded to, due to the dip of the mountain, not a single spot could be found on which a tent could be pitched. This also gives some idea of the deceptive steepness of the slope. When, on a later attempt, tents were erected, the flooring had to be walled up to a level by stones piled one on another in layers of increasing thickness.

The climbers had no time to spare on such architecture. They slept out at 25,000 feet. Next day, with indomitable resolution, they resumed the ascent. Their courage was as high as ever, but all the "tucker" had gone out of them. They were conscious only of being very tired and very lonely. Still they kept on till, at a height of 26,985 feet, it was forced home, even on them, that success was impossible and that to persevere meant death. They turned and descended. On the way they picked up Morshead, whom they had been obliged to leave at the bivouac. He was in good spirits, but poor fettle, and required nursing all through the descent. A little later the party had as narrow an escape from sheer destruction as could well be. Mallory was leading, when the third man on the rope slipped and pulled the fourth off his balance. The second man did his best to hold them, but on that tilted surface he had no chance. Still he did check them, and that

check, ineffectual as it was, was nevertheless invaluable. Then the whole three began to slide, and nothing could have stopped them but Mallory. Recognizing instantly that something was wrong behind, he, on the second, plunged the shaft of his ice-axe as deep as possible into the snow, with lightning quickness hitched the rope round the head, and bent all his weight on it. The slip was stopped. Had Mallory been a fraction less ready, he too must have been carried away, and the whole party would have gone sliding down the mountain-side till—out of sight. Also it is possible that even Mallory could not have held them had not the pace of the slide been modified by the slight but priceless check given by the second man. Whereafter they worked their way down eventually to Camp 3, all done up, and Morshead in very bad case with fingers frostbitten.

Once more into the breach ! This time Finch and Geoffrey Bruce, with Tebjir (a porter), tent, and oxygen cylinders. This time, too, a tent contrived to be pitched, at 25,000 feet, and the climbers turned in to sleep. There was no sleep for them. The tempest was awake, and so must be all else in his path that had hearing. It is wonderful that tent and men were not whirled away. A more wonderful thing happened next morning. Captain Noel, from the camp at 23,000 feet, sent up porters through the gale to the camp at 25,000 feet.

Consider what this meant ! It means that if those Sherpas had the spirit of the Alpine guides, let alone the enthusiasm of British mountaineers, they could bag Everest's scalp any season they liked. Why, they play about at 19,000 feet with great hulking loads most of us could not lift in Hyde Park. They can live normally 'teens of thousands of feet up, whilst we have to hunt around to find a habitation over 1,000 feet above sea-level. When we do find one such, it is generally

a hotel of sorts where we are charged extra on account of the trouble of bringing the food and drink—especially the drink—all that way up. Something seems to be wanting in the Sherpa make-up. Something is wanting! In the first place, he will work like a horse till he cracks, but when he does crack he does it thoroughly. Not all the king's horses, not a regiment of bayonets threatening his rear, will "perwail on him" to move on. Again, he resembles the little boy who said he would not bathe till he had learnt to swim. At 19,000 feet he was quite at home, but became more and more the diffident stranger with every succeeding 500 feet. Higher up still he had to be coached or jockeyed upwards, to the great exhaustion of the reserves of strength and temper of our people. Once let him get to a given altitude and realize that he can do so, and he does it. The mere idea of attaining 23,000 feet, let alone 25,000, had been outside his catalogue only a short time earlier. Now it was all in the day's work—an Everest day's work, that is.

The exasperated tempest shrieked and bullied more fiercely than ever, but in vain. Finch, Bruce, and Tebjir settled themselves for another night out, and attacked the next day. After climbing awhile the plucky Tebjir, who was carrying the oxygen cylinders, collapsed under their weight (Colonel Norton had something to say about oxygen, apart from cylinders), and had to return. Finch and Bruce held onward and upward till, at a height of 27,235 feet, out on the face, something went wrong with Bruce's apparatus.

Finch linked it up with his own.

As one studies the story of Everest one begins to cease to be astonished, but this amazing sentence startles one back to something like comprehension. Out on the face of Everest, where only the hardiest could arrive, and only the very few

would not be occupied in the exclusive business of being where they wanted to be and not in an undesirable elsewhere, one man linked up his oxygen apparatus with another's. An experiment in a room in England will suggest.

Then the linked battalion turned back and arrived very much done up, but soon recovered after Captain Noel had taken them in charge. Indeed, so completely fit and well were the members of the expedition that Strutt, Morshead, G. Bruce, Norton, and Longstaff had to be sent back to Sikkim, leaving Mallory, Somervell, and Finch to climb, supported by Wakefield and the stalwart remainder at Camp 3. At this point Finch " took sick," and had to return to the Base Camp, and was thence forwarded to Sikkim.

These last two paragraphs are instructive to those with understanding. There was not a weak spot in the physique or constitution of any member of the expedition. They had been " vetted " with impertinent thoroughness. They were all A1 at Lloyd's, yet some half were little better than wrecks, and had to go into dock for overhauling and repairs. It is questionable whether those at the front were in much better case. To revert again to Switzerland. If it had been a matter of climbing a familiar peak, it is in a high degree probable that Mallory or Somervell or Crawford (who had joined up again) would have declared they did not feel up to it ; but tackling Everest and climbing a ——horn are two very different propositions. One gets some conception of the terrific strain of the essay and the grit of the climbers from such reflection.

The monsoon behaves itself very much like other changes of season, even of English seasons when they pretend to be such. It is too painful to refer to the heralds of spring and its detestable frustrations. The other end of the calendar is

more relative. We have a sudden break-up of the weather threatening a long winter, then a halcyon spell, another break-up, a St. Luke's summer, and so forth. The monsoon does much the same on a giant scale, and in markedly staccato fashion. The scheme was to rush the peak in one sharp interval. The outset was inauspicious, snow fell heavily, precluding all possibility of advance. At length the barrage ceased, and the attack moved forward. The new defences of reinforced snow, formidable in themselves, were the more so in that they might also be treacherous. Attempts were made to dislodge them by trenching along the bases so that the weight of the superincumbent layers might bring down the whole mass in one mighty anticipated avalanche. In vain. The new-fallen snow clung to the walls of the Col as if thereto cemented. Nothing seemed able to move it, so that it was with some confidence that the attack—Mallory, Somervell, and Crawford, with fourteen porters—moved onwards and upwards. On the slopes of the final corridor, some 600 feet below the Col, they rested. The end of the first stage was almost in touch. Then, about a hundred feet higher, the giant of the mountains stirred in his lethargy and, with a shrug, shook off the impertinent midgets who were essaying to intrude into his sanctuary. With a dull, rending crash a fissure opened in the snow above the leader, and the great mass avalanched. The entire party were swept away as helpless as matches on the back of a wave. Almost immediately were they submerged, but Mallory, Somervell, and Crawford, trained mountaineers, fought to keep near the surface, and, as the speed of the avalanche slackened, cut and worried their way to the fresh air. Assured of safety themselves, the first consideration was the safety of the rest. Some distance below they could see four porters, secure, but it became evident that the remainder had been swept over a

40-foot ice cliff to irretrievable destruction. Not quite irretrievable. The three battered Britons formed themselves into an immediate rescue-party, and succeeded in extricating some. One of these, Angtarke, had been carrying the oxygen apparatus, and was dug out upside down after having been buried forty minutes. He was not very long in recovering, either, for the time, though the after-effects were serious. Seven, however, remained beneath the snow and ice, and still remain—and shall until the remote day when the glacier gives up its dead. With this melancholy repulse ended the second attempt.

In 1924 the campaign was reopened. This time General Bruce was again in command, with Colonel Norton as his chief of staff. Mallory, Somervell, Geoffrey Bruce, and Noel represented the rest of the Old Brigade. The new blood was made up thus: R. W. G. Hingston, medical officer; G. O. Shebbeare, transport officer from the Base Camp; N. E. Odell, Bentley Beetham, J. de V. Hazard, and Andrew Irvine. These last four are interesting home personalities. Odell was a man of muscle. He had a fine mountaineering record, and if speed limits were actionable, one noteworthy descent of his would assuredly have entailed fine if not imprisonment. Bentley Beetham was reputed to have extended Somervell on a peak-bagging holiday in the Alps. He is the kind of man you could only try to hurt with a meat axe, with the prospect of a summons for damaging the axe. Hazard, strong amongst the strong, had started climbing in his teens when an engineering student at Leeds University, and at that early age had made himself a reputation. In the War he had served in India as a "sapper"—a desirable qualification. Andrew Irvine had rowed in the Oxford boat, and that not at bow or stroke, which gives an indication of his size and weight. Although

still in *statu pupillari*, he was reckoned "a very great asset." He joined, "bringing with him magnificent recommendations from Longstaff and Odell after Spitzbergen experiences, and, further, bringing his own great personality." He was thought to be the problem of the party. The real problem turned out to be Odell, who was not unnaturally expected to start fit, keep fit, and get fitter. Instead, acclimatization with him was slow and painful, but, once acquired, he proved the toughest Roman of them all.

There was considerable hesitation in asking Mallory. He had served on the two previous expeditions, and had spent himself freely. Still, without Mallory the venture would be like the tragedy of *Hamlet*, the character of the Prince of Denmark being left out. There was some reasonable hesitation on his side. He was married and comfortably settled. Nevertheless, he would have eaten his heart out had he been left behind. How could he, in his own words, "be out of the hunt"? He was under no misapprehension as to the magnitude and peril of the enterprise. "Mount Everest," he writes, "is capable of a severity so awful and so fatal that the wiser sort of men do well to think and tremble even on the threshold of their high endeavour." And elsewhere: "The issue will shortly be decided. The third time we walk up East Rongbuk Glacier will be the last, for better or worse. . . . We expect no mercy from Everest."

It was a great effort, and carried both in men and material the earnest of success; but, to quote Mummery: "Our best efforts must sometimes be seconded by the great goddess of Luck;" and luck was dead against us even before we had come into action.

First of all General Bruce went down with malarial fever at Tuna, somewhere about the height of Mont Blanc above

sea-level. The fever he got rid of in four days, but "had to be carried out of Tibet completely incapacitated." He tried to make out that his loss really did not make much difference, which is sporting but unconvincing. The loss of a man who on each occasion was sought out as *the* ideal leader could make no difference! Of course not!

It would be tedious to recount the subsequent misfortunes in detail, chronological or other. The weather was execrable, and the North Col had deteriorated from the bad of 1922 to the worse—the very much worse—of 1924. Also on one occasion, at a height of 21,000 feet, the temperature dropped to 53½° of frost, and knocked all the heat and life and stuffing out of the porters. It required all Colonel Norton's warmth and energy to make men of them again. A little later another ferocious blizzard came along and doubled them up, leaving them down and out. This time Geoffrey Bruce arose in his might, as a kind of Agamemnon-Ulysses, a leader of men and heroic orator. He restored the line, but that was all that was possible. Advance in the face of such odds was impracticable. Sickness was rife. One man was dangerously ill with pneumonia; another, Manbahadur, a cobbler, had his feet frost-bitten up to the ankles; Shamsher, a Ghurka N.C.O., and one of the most efficient of the rank and file, was almost unconscious from a clot of blood on the brain. These two last, unhappily, succumbed.

There is a good deal of grim humour about one incident, showing how one's sin will find one out. Dr. Somervell had missed some of his underclothing on the trek. One day news came to him that a certain porter—one Tamding—had broken his leg. Up went the medical missionary hotfoot, on his work of mercy, dressed the limb—and found his clothes.

From this time forward the enterprise became a hopeless

struggle against incalculable odds. Had the conditions been as in 1921, it is in a high degree probable that Everest would not only have been conquered, but conquered without excessive effort considering the magnitude of the enterprise. In 1921, with the exception of some hard step-cutting towards the finish, the North Col had not proved seriously difficult of access. In 1924 "the effort to establish a camp on the North Col, though ultimately successful, left the party so weakened that our ultimate failure became almost a foregone conclusion." The mischief had begun earlier. Bentley Beetham, like Raeburn on an earlier expedition, had gone down with dysentery. Rallying, he came again, only to be crippled with sciatica; again he rallied, mutinied, informed the medical officer in charge briefly that he could go to the devil; with undying pluck hobbled on, only to realize that all the grit in creation cannot unsciaticize a man with sciatica, and back he had to go finally—very, very bad indeed. It is to be suspected that some of the others were in not much better case. It was assuredly not a party of fit men who tackled the North Col. Sick and ailing would possibly be not very far from the truth.

On former occasions the climbers had been able to walk, in a mountaineering sense, from the camp below the Col on to its base and some half-way up. In 1924 the Col was separated from the glacier by a savage gap, an icy fissure or bergschrund, unbridged, uncrossable. Whereupon Mallory and Norton cut their way down one side of the crevasse, crossed it, and cut up the other. This is not quite so simple or easy as it reads. They were followed by Odell and Llakpa, erstwhile henchman to General Bruce. Then the hard work commenced.

The crux was a chimney—that is, a steep or vertical fissure, large enough to contain a man more or less comfortably. This chimney was composed entirely of ice. On rock, chimneys

are generally ascended with the back against one wall, with the feet, knees, or hands making use of any excrescences or fissures on the other to work the body upwards. Now ice is not rock. It is smooth and very cold. Holds have to be fashioned with the ice-axe. It was " as hard a climb as one would wish to find in the Alps." This 150 to 200 feet occupied the leaders about an hour. Odell and Llakpa followed with pegs wherewith to fix ropes for the porters. Thereafter the road to the summit of the Col was safe and easy save for a trifling apprehension lest the last 200 feet of snow should peel off. It had done so once before in 1921, but then there was no one on it.

They had reached the top of the Col, but they had to return, and they were tired, fagged out; not the ordinary kind of tiredness, but the dull, deadly kind—the kind when you don't know what is going to happen and don't much care whether it does or not. Mallory fell into " an obvious crevasse." Norton slipped. Llakpa slipped, as might indeed have been expected. Odell, the only man who did not slip, seems so to have expected, for, in a moment of wakefulness, he did put Llakpa on a rope. He must have been half asleep, however, for he allowed Llakpa to tie on, instead of seeing to the business himself. Llakpa tied on with a " granny," which came unstuck with the jerk of the slip, and, but for a fortunate soft patch of snow, the unwary man would have finished up in the bergschrund, or thereabouts. As it was, he got the scare of a lifetime, and was badly jolted up into the bargain. Mallory's account of his mishap is illuminating. Here is an extract from his letter, dated May 27, 1924, to Mrs. Mallory :

" Meanwhile I, finding the best way down, had walked into an obvious crevasse ; by some miscalculation I had thought I had prodded the snow with which it was choked, and where

I hoped we could walk instead of cutting steps at the side of it—all the result of mere exhaustion, no doubt. But the snow gave way, and in I went with the snow tumbling all round me, down, luckily, only about 10 feet before I fetched up, half-blind and breathless, to find myself most precariously supported only by my ice-axe somehow caught across the crevasse, and still held in my right hand—and below was a very unpleasant black hole. I had some nasty moments before I got comfortably wedged and began to yell for help up through the round hole I had come through, where the blue sky showed —this because I was afraid my operations to extricate myself would bring down a lot more snow, and perhaps precipitate me into the bargain. However, I soon grew tired of shouting—they hadn't seen me from above; and, bringing the snow down a little at a time, I made a hole out towards the side (the crevasse ran down a slope) after some climbing, and extricated myself, but was then on the wrong side of the crevasse, so that eventually I had to cut across a nasty slope of very hard ice, and farther down some mixed unpleasant snow, before I was out of the wood. The others were down by a better line about ten minutes before me. That cutting against time at the end of such a day just about brought me to my limit."

This letter conveys an idea of the general weariness of the party. The others do not appear so much as to have missed Mallory. Later on the letter goes on to comment on the health of the party, which was pretty bad throughout. Bruce was the only fit man. Mallory had one of those coughs which wrench one's inside nearly out, "and a headache and misery altogether."

Colonel Norton did his best to give the details under his command as much rest as possible, but misfortune was active and spiteful. After the above enterprise a camp had been

fixed up on the Col, and Hazard had been left in charge with twelve porters. These had a rough time, so much so that there was some anxiety about them at the lower camp. It was a relief when Hazard was seen returning—a relief which turned to something like dismay when it was noted that only eight porters were with him. The other four had refused to follow, perhaps because they were unwell, more probably because one had started a patch of snow and they had got scared. Hazard was then in most unenviable plight, just in one of those positions in which whatever you do is bound to be wrong even though it is right. He could not ask the eight porters to go back and shepherd the four behind. To return and try to get them down himself would probably have been futile, certainly dangerous. (When Somervell effected his wonderful rescue next day, the men were more afraid of the mountain than the descent; when they refused to follow Hazard they were more afraid of the descent than the mountain. That made all the difference.) Also the leader's return would have meant abandoning the other eight. These, left to themselves, would have been in serious peril, and had Hazard, as might quite likely have happened, got marooned with the rest, would almost assuredly have come to grief. Wherefore he decided on bringing off the bulk of his forces intact.

The mishap was about the last nail. The men had to be rescued at all costs, and those costs quite possibly included the assured success of the venture and the lives of Mallory and Irvine. It was a task, difficult and perilous, making demand on skill, strength, nerve, and tact—a task only to be entrusted to the most efficient, and these were docketed for a rest-cure preparatory to the final assault.

The rest-cure was on this wise:

At 7.30 a.m. Norton, Mallory, and Somervell started.

The temperature was 2° Fahr. The snow was anything from a foot to waist-deep. At long last they got within conversational touch of the marooned four, and found them in bad case, but still equal to essaying the descent. The relief party persevered till they found themselves on a level with the porters, but separated from them by an ice slope of something over 200 feet wide. Somervell insisted on crossing. "He punched big, safe steps, and continually stopped to cough and choke in the most painful manner. After one or two of these fits of coughing, he leant his head on his forearm in an attitude of exhaustion, and so steep was the slope that the mental picture I have of him, as he did this, shows him standing almost upright in his steps with his elbow resting on the snow level with his shoulder.

"He reached the end of the rope, and found he was five to ten yards short of the goal. The men must cross to him, and with no rope. The first came over safely, and proceeded towards Norton and Mallory. Just as the second was joining Somervell, the last two men slipped and began to slide towards certain death, but they miraculously pulled up in a few yards. Somervell was now superb. He told the two men to remain still whilst he passed the second man back along the rope, joking the while, so that one of the two men sitting shivering on the edge of the ice-cliff actually gave a short bark of laughter. They sat like statues. Somervell then drove his axe in up to the head, pulled the rope tight, passed it round his axe, and so made enough rope to reach the men with one arm at full stretch, holding the very end of the rope with the other. He dragged them up by the scruff of the neck, and passed them along to safety." On the way down Norton had to take on the whole weight of one of the porters, who had been badly frostbitten, at least four times.

Whereafter Norton and Somervell set about getting ready for an assault on Everest.

Somervell was assuredly not in fettle for a big effort. His throat was very bad, his cough distressing and exhausting. Others were in scarcely better case. In fact, to insist on an earlier proposition, had the ascent of, say, the Breithorn been in question, probably every man would have shied, but then the Breithorn is not Everest, neither is Everest the Breithorn.

There are certain heroic figures which can only be portrayed in marble. No painter of an Apollo or a Hercules can attempt to rival the sculptor. Any attempted embellishment is not gilding refined gold ; it is atrocious. A statue tinted to make it more lifelike is an outrage even to the imagination. It is the same with certain actions ; any attempt to work up an interest is a " barbarous skill " ; an adornment with too much art is not only bad taste but futile. The noble outlines suffice. It will therefore be understood that the accounts of the two final assaults on Everest will be advisedly set down in the simplest possible language, and that, where considered desirable, extracts from dispatches and like documents will be adopted.

Norton and Somervell constituted the first party, and determined to make the essay without oxygen. This time the tent was pitched at a height of about 26,800 feet. As always, owing to the dip of the mountain, the floor had to be levelled up. Whilst the two with their porters were working their tedious way up, a notable excursion was being made below. At a height of 25,000 feet, Odell took it into his head he would like to go and have a look for fossils ; and he did, and made the first Everest collection. " Hazard accompanied for air and exercise "—at 25,000 feet, some 10,000 feet higher than Mont Blanc. Nevertheless, in the matter of energy, there is a great

deal more than 2,000 feet distinction between 25,000 and 27,000 feet, the height from which Norton and Somervell were to make their final rush.

It was a very slow rush. "My ambition," writes Colonel Norton, "was to do twenty consecutive paces uphill without a pause to rest and pant, elbow on bent knee; yet I never remember achieving it—thirteen was nearer the mark. . . . Every five or ten minutes we had to sit down for a minute or two."

At midday Somervell succumbed to his throat trouble, and Colonel Norton proceeded alone, leaving his companion just below the top edge of the great 1,000-foot wide belt of yellow sandstone which runs across the north face of the mountain.

"I followed the actual top edge of the band which led at a very uphill angle, and across the big couloir; but to reach the latter I had to turn the ends of two pronounced buttresses which ran down the face of the mountain, one of which was a prolongation of a feature on the sky-line ridge, which we had called the second step, and which looked so formidable an obstacle where it crossed the ridge, that we had chosen the lower route rather than try and surmount it at its highest point. From about the place where I met these buttresses the going became a great deal worse—the slope was very steep below me, the foothold ledges narrowed to a few inches in width, and as I approached the shelter of the big couloir there was a lot of powdery snow which concealed precarious footholds. The whole face of the mountain was composed of slabs like the tiles on a roof, and all sloped at much the same angle as tiles. I had twice to retrace my steps and follow a different band of strata; the couloir itself was filled with powdery snow, into which I sank to the knee and even to the

waist, and which was yet not of a consistency to support me in the event of a slip. Beyond the couloir the going got steadily worse ; I found myself stepping from tile to tile, as it were, each tile sloping smoothly and steeply downwards ; I began to feel that I was too much dependent on the mere friction of a bootnail on the slabs. It was not exactly difficult going, but it was a dangerous place for a single unroped climber, as one slip would have sent me in all probability to the bottom of the mountain."

At 28,126 feet, within 1,000 feet of the summit, Colonel Norton turned back, done up, worn out in nerve and body. Whether he would have reached the summit but for the exhaustion consequent on the rescue of the porters is at least an open question ; that he would have attained on such a day, but for the constantly adverse conditions and happenings precedent, is in a high degree probable.

One incident he quotes which shows he was really all to pieces—the sudden feeling of helpless inability to get on which occasionally attacks very weary men, not owing to an increase of difficulty, but to a change of aspect. It is curious, but not unusual. In this case it was a patch of snow, " neither steep nor difficult," but Somervell had to come and help him over with a rope.

Then they started down the " easy " slope. Soon after " Somervell's axe slipped from his numb fingers and went cart-wheeling down the slopes below . . . and it is a proof of the deceptive nature of the true angle of the mountain conveyed by these photographs, that it does not give the impression that a dropped axe would go any distance without coming to rest ; yet his never looked like stopping, and disappeared from our view still going strong." (See remarks on Mountain Photography, p. 198.)

Later, Colonel Norton had to wait some half-hour for Somervell, who, he thought, had stopped to take a photograph or sketch. He had not. The cause of delay was "a more than usually severe fit of coughing, which had ended up by very nearly choking him, and he was probably only saved by coughing up the obstructing matter along with a lot of blood." At length they got within hail of the Support Camp, very tired and, as related, very thirsty. A few hours later Norton was stricken with snow-blindness, which continued for sixty hours, causing considerable pain. Whilst thus disabled he was taken down from the Col to the camp below by Hingston, assisted for a part of the way by Hazard. This sounds something of an exploit, but it was all in the day's work for these men. Meanwhile Mallory had started for the final effort.

Of the two other climbers available, Irvine and Odell (Geoffrey Bruce was incapacitated by heart-strain), he selected Irvine. Norton recommended Odell instead, and there are many who are confident he was right. Odell looked, and proved later to be, far the fittest man there. Mallory, however, adhered to his choice. Oxygen was being taken, as a sufficiency of transport had been released by various circumstances to secure the portage of an adequate number of cylinders. Odell and Irvine were "both thoroughly *au fait*" with every detail of the oxygen apparatus. Irvine, however, seems to have been something of a genius in dealing with these contraptions, and had entire faith in the efficiency of the gas. Odell had not. Moreover, Mallory had taken Irvine sundry trial trips with him, and a mutual understanding as to signals had been established between them which might prove above price. How Odell would have fared is, of course, guesswork, but his amazing exploits a few hours later certainly justify a belief that the summit was within his powers.

The story of the attempt is best told in extracts from Odell's report to the Alpine Club, as indicated by inverted commas :

" At 8.40 on the morning of 6th June, in brilliant weather, Mallory and Irvine left the North Col Camp " (23,000 feet) " for Camp 5. They took with them five porters, carrying provisions and reserve oxygen cylinders. They used oxygen and, in the opinion of the porters, travelled well. On 7th June, when they were going from Camp 5 to Camp 6, I went up in support to Camp 5 with the one porter that was available." This man Odell soon after sent down as he was suffering from mountain sickness.

" Next morning broke clear and not unduly cold. I started on my solitary climb to Camp 6 " (27,000 feet).

" At about 26,000 feet I climbed a little crag, which could possibly have been circumvented, but which I decided to tackle direct, *more perhaps as a test of my condition than for any other reason.*" (The italics are the writer's.) " There was, perhaps, 100 feet of it, and as I reached the top there was a sudden clearing above me, and I saw the whole summit ridge and final peak of Everest unveiled. I noticed, far away on a snow-slope leading up to the last step but one from the base of the final pyramid a tiny object moving and approaching the rock step. A second object followed, and then the first climbed to the top of the step. As I stood intently watching this dramatic appearance, the scene became envelped in a cloud, and I could not actually be certain that I saw the second figure join the first. I was surprised, above all, to see them so late as this—namely, 12.50—at a point that, according to Mallory's schedule, should have been reached by 10 a.m. at latest. I could see that they were moving expeditiously, as if endeavouring to make up for lost time. True, they were moving one at

a time over what was apparently but moderately difficult ground, but one cannot definitely conclude from this that they were roped—an important consideration in any estimate of what befell them. I had seen that there was a considerable quantity of new snow covering some of the upper rocks near the summit ridge, and this may well have caused delay in the ascent. Burdened as they undoubtedly were with the oxygen apparatus, these snow-covered, débris-sprinkled slabs may have given much trouble. The oxygen apparatus itself may have needed repair or readjustment, either before or after they left Camp 6, and so have delayed them. Or both these factors may have been operative."

Odell then went on to Camp 6 (27,000 feet), and met some rather bad weather. He reflected that if Mallory and Irvine had been turned by adverse conditions they might be on their way back already, in which case they might have difficulty in finding the camp, more especially as Mallory had left his compass at Camp 5 (25,000 feet). So he went out in the direction of the summit, scrambled up about 200 feet, and jodelled and whistled—all this at that impossible elevation and without oxygen. Then the weather cleared and, as there was no sign of the party, he went back to Camp 6. Recollecting that this would only hold two, and that two very weary men might be expected to arrive there, he went down to Camp 5, and so to the North Col.

Late that night and all next morning Hazard and Odell scanned the mountain side, but in vain. At noon Odell started up to Camp 5 with two porters. Next morning he sent them back as unfit, and again climbed up to Camp 6 alone. The tent was empty, and had not been visited since he left it. Then in a bitter wind he forced his way along the route Mallory and Irvine had probably taken. At length,

after two hours' search in vain, he returned to the camp and made an agreed signal to Hazard that all hope must be abandoned. A search-party was, of course, impracticable, and, had it been practicable, would have been useless. No human being could have survived a night in the open at that height. Reluctantly and sorrowfully Odell made his way down. He had, as a support, accomplished one of the most remarkable feats of mountaineering and endurance on record. He was probably quite unconscious of his exploit then, and very likely pays but little heed to it now.

Whether Mallory and Irvine reached the summit or not it is unlikely that we shall ever know. It is very probable that they did, and that they were benighted on the way back. In that case they would have laid them down to shelter where they could, and slept themselves away painlessly into the Beyond. Other conjectures may occur, but they are unprofitable and somewhat painful withal.

> "Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
> Dispraise and blame, nothing but well and fair,
> And what may quiet us in a death so noble."

THE END

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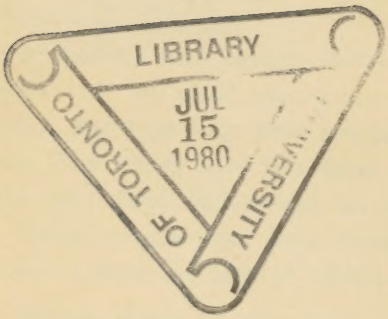
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